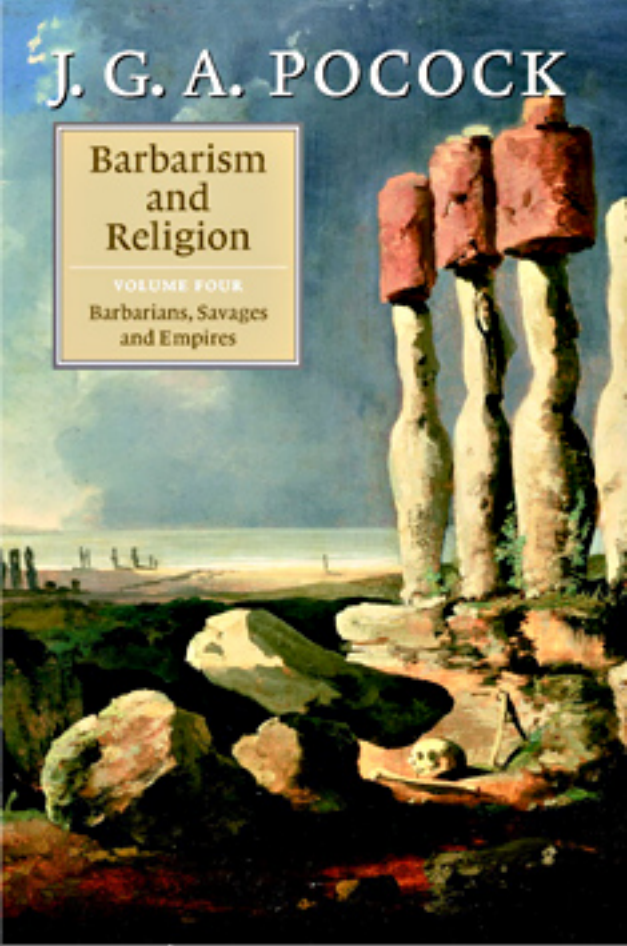
J. G. A. POCOCK

Barbarism and Religion

VOLUME FOUR

Barbarians, Savages and Empires



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BARBARISM AND RELIGION

Volume Four

Barbarians, Savages and Empires

This fourth volume in John Pocock's great sequence on *Barbarism and Religion* focuses on the idea of barbarism. Barbarism was central to the history of western historiography, to the history of Enlightenment, and to Edward Gibbon himself: as a concept it was central to understanding its converse, civility, and deeply problematic to enlightened historians seeking to understand their own civil societies in the light of exposure to newly discovered civilisations hitherto beyond the reach of history. The troubled relationship between philosophy and history is addressed squarely in this fourth volume, and as before John Pocock grounds his arguments in intensive analyses of a number of major texts by which Gibbon was particularly influenced; those of Goguet, de Guignes, Robertson and Raynal in particular. As *Barbarism and Religion* develops, its full stature becomes apparent: in the end, it will stand not just as a remarkable analysis of the making of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, but as the definitive history of history-writing in what David Hume famously called 'the historical age'.

J. G. A. POCOCK was born in London and brought up in Christchurch, New Zealand, and educated at the Universities of Canterbury and Cambridge. He is now Harry C. Black Emeritus Professor of History at the Johns Hopkins University. His many seminal works on intellectual history include *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (1957, second edition 1987), *Politics, Language and Time* (1971), *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975, second edition 2003), *Virtue, Commerce and History* (1985) and four volumes in an ongoing sequence, initiated in 1999, on *Barbarism and Religion.* He has also edited *The Political Works of James Harrington* (1977) and Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1987), as well as the collaborative study *The Varieties of British Political Thought* (1995). A Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and of the Royal Historical Society, Professor Pocock is also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Philosophical Society. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of New Zealand Merit in 2002.

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Volume Four

Barbarians, Savages and Empires

J. G. A. POCOCK

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521856256

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First published in print format 2005

ISBN-13 978-0-511-13546-0 eBook (EBL)
ISBN-10 0-511-13546-7 eBook (EBL)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-85625-6 hardback
ISBN-10 0-521-85625-6 hardback

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Sans doute il est importante aux générations futures de ne pas perdre le tableau de la vie et des moeurs des sauvages. C'est peut-être à cette connoissance que nous devons tous les progrès que la philosophie morale a faits parmi nous.

Denis Diderot [?] in the *Histoire des deux Indes*

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Acknowledgements

Most of the research for this book was done in the Library of Congress, the Folger Shakespeare Library and the Milton S. Eisenhower and George W. Peabody Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University. I thank the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars for a fellowship long ago which set this process in motion; the Mellon Foundation and Tulane University for a fellowship in 1996; the Folger Institute Center for the History of British Political Thought, for unceasing stimulus; and the History Department of the Johns Hopkins University, for support over the decade since I became a professor emeritus.

In pursuing this volume, the scholarship of the eighteenth century has carried me into many fields where the expertise of the twenty-first century exceeds mine. I could not have written it without the help of many readers who bear no responsibility for the use I have made of their kindness. I particularly thank Sam Adshead, Jorge Cañizares Esguerra, Minghui Hu, Richard Kagan, Sankar Muthu, Nicholas Phillipson and Jonathan Spence.

I also wish to thank Caleb McDaniel and Alana Bevan, for their work in preparing the typescript, and as always Felicity Pocock, for viva voce aid in proofreading as well as for everything else.

Baltimore, Maryland
November 2004

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in this book. For other references, by author's name and date of publication, the Bibliography of works cited should be consulted.

A	*The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon, Printed Verbatim from Hitherto Unpublished MSS, with an Introduction by the Earl of Sheffield*. Edited by John Murray. Second edition. London, John Murray, 1897.
Carte, 1747	Thomas Carte: *A General History of England. Containing an Account of the First Inhabitants of the Country, and the Transactions in it, from the Earliest Times to the Death of King John, AD MCCXVI.* London.
DF	Edward Gibbon: *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Cited by volume, chapter and note; for page references, see Womersley, 1994.
DNB	*Concise Dictionary of National Biography, volume* 1, *to 1900*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, repr. 1948.
EEG	J. G. A. Pocock: *Barbarism and Religion*, volume 1: *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
EGLH	Patricia Craddock: *Edward Gibbon, Luminous Historian*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.
FDF	J. G. A. Pocock: *Barbarism and Religion*, volume III: *The First Decline and Fall*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Goguet, 1758	Antoine-Yves Goguet: *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences: et de leurs progrès chez les anciens peuples.* Paris.
Goguet, 1761	Antoine-Yves Goguet: *The Origin of Laws, Arts and Sciences, and their Progress among the Most Ancient Nations, Translated from the French of the President de Goguet.* Edinburgh. Reprinted New York, AMS Press, 1976.
HDI	Guillaume-Thomas Raynal: *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*. Geneva, 1780. HDI, 1775: edition of that date.
HHTM	Joseph de Guignes: *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres peuples Tartares occidentaux*. Paris, 1756–8.
Journal A	D. M. Low (ed.): *Gibbon's Journal to January 28th, 1763: My Journal, I, II, III, and Ephemerides*. London, Chatto and Windus, 1929.
Journal B	Georges A. Bonnard (ed.): *Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne, 17 Août 1763–19 Avril 1764*. Lausanne, Librairie de l'Université, 1945.
Justamond	*Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies . . . by the Abbé Raynal, Newly Translated from the French by J. O. Justamond, F.R.S.* (Six volumes, London, 1798.) Reprinted New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969.
Letters	J. E. Norton (ed.): *The Letters of Edward Gibbon*. London, Cassell, 1956.
Library	Geoffrey Keynes (ed.): *The Library of Edward Gibbon*. Second edition. London, St Paul's Bibliographies, 1980.
MW	Lord Sheffield (ed.): *The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq., with Memoirs of his Life and Writings, Composed by Himself; Illustrated from his Letters, with Occasional Notes and Narrative. A new edition, with considerable additions*. London, John Murray, 1814.

NCG	J. G. A. Pocock: *Barbarism and Religion*, volume 11: *Narratives of Civil Government*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999.
Womersley, 1994	David Womersley (ed.): *Edward Gibbon: The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. London: Allan Lane, The Penguin Press.
Works	*The Works of William Robertson, D.D., with an Account of his Life and Writings*. London, 1824.
YEG	Patricia Craddock: *Young Edward Gibbon, Gentleman of Letters*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.

Introduction

This volume occupies a special place in its series. In the first fourteen chapters of the *Decline and Fall* – the subject of *Barbarism and Religion* III: *The First Decline and Fall* – Gibbon related the disintegration of the imperial regime of pagan Rome, but did not arrive at the disintegration of the system of polytheism on which it was based. He reached the moment at which the Christian church was about to become the established religion of the empire, but, instead of going on to narrate how this happened or what had been its consequences, interrupted his narrative to insert the two chapters on the church before Constantine, which are the subject of a future volume of *Barbarism and Religion*. He had thus introduced the theme of religion, one of the two forces whose triumph he came to see the *Decline and Fall* as narrating; but the break in sequence caused by the insertion of chapters 15 and 16 was such that he did not resume this theme, or return to the point reached at the end of chapter 14, until he published his second volume in 1781, five years after its predecessor. Not only the causes of this hiatus, but its effects on both the writing and the reception of the *Decline and Fall,* present problems with which this series must be concerned. We are at midpoint in a study of how the theme of religion entered Gibbon's history and came to dominate it; and what happened when he took up the narrative again in his second volume of 1781 will also be the subject of a further volume of this series.

The theme of barbarism, however, has already appeared. Chapters 8, 9 and 10 of the 1776 volume were mentioned in *The First Decline and Fall* for their role in unfolding the narrative of imperial decay, but it was remarked at the same time[1] that they initiated a theme of another kind: that of who the barbarian peoples were, what were their cultures, and what was to be made of 'barbarians' as a category and phenomenon which (in a relationship with religion yet to be understood) came to replace the Roman world and lay the

[1] FDF, pp. 464–6.

foundations of the European. How chapters 8 to 10 initiate this theme is the subject of the first part of the present volume, 'The History and Theory of Barbarism'. It is necessary to consider 'barbarism' as a concept both ancient and modern – meaning by 'modern' the patterns of thought emerging in periods preceding and including Gibbon's own – with a view to seeing how he employed the term and what part it played in the discourse to which he contributed. Here an important role is played by stadial theory: that is, by the sequence of stages through which human society was held to have progressed by eighteenth-century philosophic jurists, moralists and historians. Gibbon was on friendly terms with David Hume, William Robertson, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, Scottish leaders in the construction of this branch of 'philosophy', in whose works the 'barbarian' was commonly identified with the shepherd or pastoralist and European history presented as the outcome of periodic 'barbarian' invasions by 'shepherd' peoples and their subsequent civilisation.[2] He took much from them in his accounts of the German, Gothic and Scythian invaders of the Roman frontiers, but it can be shown that he relied also on earlier works, in which the biblical chronologies and Noachic genealogies – derided by Gibbon – were compatible with schemes of stadial development, and on systems like that of Antoine-Yves Goguet,[3] which did not draw the sharp Scottish distinction between hunting and herding peoples or between the 'savage' and the 'barbarian'. Gibbon not uncommonly used these terms interchangeably, and it has been argued that European history, as he learned it from the Scots, contained no 'savage' stage – no stage, that is, at which the western peninsulas of Eurasia had been populated by hunter-gatherer peoples. The crucial step for Gibbon, as for others, became the equation of the shepherd stage with the nomad pastoralists of central Asia, whose intermittent mobility and expansiveness had thrust the plains-dwelling Goths and the forest-dwelling Germans over the Roman frontiers, creating a crisis with which the impoverished imperial system was unable to cope.

Gibbon did not reach this moment in his first volume, or until chapter 26, which terminates his second and marks the point of division between the two volumes published in 1781. This chapter, on 'the manners of the pastoral nations', closes a volume on Constantine and his heirs which has related the establishment of Christianity, the rise of theological dispute occasioned by the marriage of religion and philosophy, and the attempt of Julian to turn the clock back to a paganism now irretrievably (as cultic

[2] NCG, pp. 328–9, 332–45; FDF, pp. 387–92, 402–3.
[3] Goguet, 1758; *Library*, p. 136.

paganism had not been) taken over by a philosophy more or less neo-Platonic. At this point the history of the Roman empire is enlarged into a history of Eurasia; the nomad Huns and Hsiung-nu are seen to have impinged on the Chinese as well as the Roman empires, and the contexts of learning needed to understand the *Decline and Fall* are enlarged by the addition of histories – notably that of Joseph de Guignes[4] – that examine both the Chinese dynasties and the nomads of the steppe. The second part of this volume is headed 'The Discovery of Eurasia'; the word 'discovery' being employed in its correct sense: the discovery that something existed by people who had not known that it did.

The 'barbarian' of antiquity, who spoke neither Greek nor Latin and did not live in free cities, had by now undergone several enlargements and mutations, merging first with the 'Gothic' and 'Scythian' invaders of the Roman provinces, secondly with the 'shepherd stage' of advanced stadial theory – which Gibbon admired if he did not always follow – and finally with the Central Asian nomads who intermittently devastated and transformed the European subcontinent. In this sequence, the barbarian inhabited both ancient and modern history, from the mythic times of the Cimmerians and the progeny of Japhet to the very recent moment when Chinese and Russians were thought to have joined hands to subjugate the steppe and end this phase of world history for ever. He – the figure was not often female – linked antiquity to modernity in more ways than one; if he had been an agent in replacing the ancient world by one of barbarism and religion, the processes of his civilising had been crucial to the replacement of the latter world by civil society and commerce. By contrast, the 'savage' – meaning the hunter or hunter-gatherer – though preceding the shepherd barbarian in the order of stadial theory, was paradoxically a figure of modern history; the more so if we speak of the 'invention' of the savage, following the conventions of a postmodernism in which nothing happens or exists other than the creation of fictions. As Europeans, who believed they had no prehistory but that of patriarchal shepherd clans, took to the sea and mastered every arm of the global ocean, they everywhere encountered peoples who might be thought hunter-gatherers, or who practised those blends of village horticulture and fishing or hunting we now have in mind when we use the term 'indigenous' (or describe them by one of the many names such people have found for themselves).[5] There ensued a complicated and disastrous history in which the will to describe such peoples as 'savage' (and so sub-human)

[4] HHTM; *Library*, p. 141.

[5] For extensions of this point in oceanic directions, see Pocock, 1992 (2001) and 1999.

was reinforced by stadial theory, for the reason that the two steps the latter thought essential to progress – the domestication of hoofed mammals and their harnessing to wheeled transport and deep-cutting ploughshares – did not seem to have occurred outside Eurasia, or in the Americas, Polynesia or Australia (the historisation of sub-Saharan Africa is a somewhat later process). In the two American continents particularly, neither pastoral nomads, productive agriculturalists nor trading cities could easily be found, or recognised when they were found, and it was overwhelmingly tempting to relegate all American peoples before settlement to the category of 'savages' defined as the first stage of human development.

The effect was to involve the savage, defined as 'primitive' or more significantly 'natural' man, in an immediate encounter with the most 'modern' of histories: that of the seaborne empires established by ocean-going Europeans after the year 1500. This was not a history Gibbon was concerned to write; the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* ends with the fall of Constantinople in 1453,[6] and the major event preceding it is the transitory supremacy of Timur – held to be the last of the nomad conquerors in ways which left the relation of Ottoman to nomad history in need of explanation.[7] But there already existed a perceived relation between the Ottoman conquests and the voyages of the Portuguese to India and the Spaniards to the New World. In the third and fourth parts of the present volume, the *Decline and Fall* will be confronted with two histories appearing between 1776 and 1781, with which Gibbon was acquainted and to which he makes reference: William Robertson's *History of America*, published in 1777–8, and the *Histoire philosophique et politique du commerce et des établissements des Européens dans les deux Indes*, written by a team of authors under the direction of the Abbé Raynal, to which the edition of 1780 gave its decisive form, largely though not wholly shaped by the contributions of Denis Diderot.

Both works confront the savage with the seaborne empire; both are deeply concerned with the enormous problems of fitting the New World into a European vision of history. Since the *Decline and Fall* is a history of empire in antiquity, late antiquity and what we term the middle ages, and since it is situated in a Eurasian history ending just before the European voyages began, it is obvious that these concepts and problems play no part in its making or its content. The enterprise of presenting Robertson and

[6] DF, VI, ch. 68. [7] DF, VI, ch. 65.

Raynal in relation to Gibbon is to some degree a continuation of that pursued in *Barbarism and Religion* II: *Narratives of Civil Government*, when a series of major Enlightened writers on history – Giannone, Voltaire, Hume and Robertson, reinforced by Smith and Ferguson – were shown to have constructed histories of the millennium of barbarism and religion and the exit from it into enlightened Europe, which helped us to understand the *Decline and Fall* as a history of the entry into that millennium and its history to 1453. *Barbarism and Religion* V will show Gibbon beginning to lay foundations for that history by laying those of 'the triumph of religion', and the first half of the present volume shows him beginning to present the theme of barbarism. Part four, 'The Crisis of the Seaborne Empires', however, reverts to volume II's enterprise of setting the *Decline and Fall* in the large context of Enlightened historiography. It does so in part because we have begun to be concerned with the hiatus in Gibbon's production of his work between 1776 and 1781. Between the year of the Declaration of Independence and that of the surrender at Yorktown, Gibbon sat in the House of Commons as an increasingly disquieted supporter of the North administration, and wrote a state paper justifying the British government against the French;[8] this may help explain the five-year delay between his volumes. It can certainly be said that the histories of Robertson and Raynal are deeply affected – in ways to be explained below – by the events of the American Revolution, and that, in sequence with those of Hume, Voltaire and Robertson himself as a historian of Europe, they show the culture of commerce and manners, civil government and civil society, which had emerged at the beginning of the century, as it plunged into what Franco Venturi termed *la prima crisi dell' Antico Regime*.[9]

The relation between this crisis and contemporary historiography, however, is by no means simple. Ingenious readers constantly search for ways in which the text of the *Decline and Fall* may be applied to the events of the 1770s and 1780s, and even if (as the present writer suspects) this search should be in vain, it was a rhetorical commonplace – to which Gibbon at least once succumbed[10] – that the decline of the Roman empire might find a parallel in the fall of the British. There are, however, massive objections in the way of this parallel. The first is that – as was widely recognised – an ancient empire held together by legionary camps along lines of communication by land was structurally and generically unlike a modern – now meaning a post-medieval – empire in which seaborne power held together

[8] Gibbon, 1778; MW, V, pp. 1–34. [9] Venturi, 1979; Litchfield, 1989. [10] FDF, p. 8.

a system of commerce. It could be, and was, added that, whereas the Romans had allowed the military government of provinces to destroy and absorb the political structure of the republic, the British were willing to see their American colonies rise in rebellion rather than extend to them the parliamentary liberties of the kingdom; the ancient parallel that suggested itself was not the Decline and Fall of the empire so much as the Social War that had hastened the downfall of the republic.[11] Lastly – though this is to look beyond 1781 – the outcome of the *prima crisi* was as much the enlargement of the British empire as its dissolution. The empire acquired in India was, disturbingly, a good deal more Roman than that lost in North America, and there was to be a later moment at which Gibbon, and after him Robertson, can be seen showing interest in Dow, Jones and Rennell, the historical scholars of British India.[12]

It is the contrast between ancient and modern empire – indeed, between ancient and modern history – which makes it important to confront the *Decline and Fall* with works of historiography appearing between 1776 and 1781; Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes* (as it is called for short) in particular. This work by many hands – just how it was written and edited is still the subject of enquiry[13] – has many faults, sentimentality and self-dramatisation among them; but it is a major achievement in several ways, and ranks as a counter-piece to the *Decline and Fall* itself.[14] Its authors provide a history of the rise (they would add the fall) of the European seaborne empires over three centuries, from the voyages of the 1490s and their encounter with the civilisations of Asia already known to them: Islam as a modern (i.e. a post-Christian) phenomenon, Hindu India with which they shared an antiquity, Confucian China as a possible alternative to the dreadful history of religion. The narrative then turns west, and becomes a history of encounter with the New World and therefore with peoples easily described as 'savage'; even the Mesoamerican and Andean city systems did not prevent this. There was added a third narrative: that of the transportation of Africans reduced to slavery, a condition as artificially distanced from civil society as that of savagery was naturally remote. The history of modern empire thus became that of encounter between European civil society and those excluded from its history.

[11] FDF, pp. 45, 48, 84–5, 162, 351–2, 396, 405.
[12] For references, see Womersley, 1994, 111, pp. 1211, 1229, 1257; *Library*, pp. 162–3, 236.
[13] The Voltaire Foundation intends a critical edition. For preliminary study, see Lüsebrink and Strugnell, 1995.
[14] For a prospectus of this volume's treatment of the *Histoire*, see Pocock, 2000.

The secondary thesis of the *Histoire des deux Indes* was that European commerce with peoples outside Europe was expropriative and monopolistic, conducted through chartered companies whose debts threatened European society itself with corruption. Here was a modern equivalent of the ancient thesis that empire corrupted the liberty that had acquired it; but the concept of savagery operated to enlarge this trope in a metahistorical direction. The savage was the natural man;[15] savage society, in so far as it existed, was as distant as possible from the hegemonies of kings, republics and priests which provided history with its subject matter; and Diderot was able to join Rousseau in asking whether it had been good to leave the state of nature for the processes of history, but whether that departure once taken was not irreversible. Here was a crucial step in late Enlightened philosophy of history, and it would not have been possible without the concept of the savage. The *Histoire* becomes a narrative of the encounter of history with nature, and necessarily (if none too satisfactorily) ends by telling Europeans they must recover their own nature, corrupted by a civil society itself corrupted by empire. The work becomes a pre-revolutionary treatise, but as with Machiavelli there is doubt whether humans are not too far committed to history to return to its beginnings.

The *Histoire des deux Indes* is therefore a work of Enlightened philosophical history which Gibbon neither could nor would have written. He had no contact with the concept (though he used the adjective) of the 'savage', and the 'barbarian' was not a figure of nature opposed to history; only in modern history, we might say, could that opposition appear – whatever ancient Cynics and Stoics might have dreamt of in their philosophy. Gibbon was writing a history of the Old World, of a Eurasia in which cities and empires interacted with the migrations of pastoralists; what is startling to our eyes is the virtual omission from Enlightened philosophy of the alluvial city empires of Mesopotamia and the Nile Valley. All these peoples could be included in histories of civil society, whether biblical, philosophical or stadial; and as Gibbon had shown in his early *Essai* against d'Alembert and the *Encyclopédie*,[16] he had no desire to leave civil history for the philosophy of nature. This choice made him a figure of the conservative rather than the *philosophe* Enlightenment. If we read the *Histoire des deux Indes* as prefiguring revolution, we must read the *Decline and Fall* as prefiguring Gibbon's instantly Burkean responses to the events of 1789–92;[17] and this antithesis must be connected with that between the *Histoire* as a history of

[15] Pagden, 1982. [16] EEG, ch. 9. [17] Womersley, 2002, pp. 195–202.

modernity, savagery and nature, the *Decline and Fall* as a history of antiquity, barbarism and religion. The former entailed a critique of civil society and civil history; the latter did not. The *Histoire* supplies the *Decline and Fall* with a context by acting as its antithesis, and the function of savagery in the present volume is to clarify what Gibbon was doing with the concept of barbarism.

PART I

The history and theory of barbarism

CHAPTER 1

Introducing the barbarian: problems of barbarism and religion

(1)

As Gibbon reached the end of chapter 7 of the *Decline and Fall*, he elegiacally reviewed Roman history since its heroic beginnings, and remarked that, as the discipline of the legions disintegrated in the wars of succession, 'the barbarians ... soon discovered the decline of the Roman empire'.[1] *The First Decline and Fall* carried on the process, through the wars of succession – in which barbarians played an increasing part – as far as the victory of Constantine; but it was observed[2] that chapters 8 to 10, immediately following the words quoted, digress from the narrative and are written in a different key. In place of the *récit* of Roman actions and their systemic consequences, these chapters offer a *peinture*[3] of the laws and manners of the invading cultures, and we shall find Gibbon observing that a history of barbarians and barbarism must be written on different principles from one in which civilised men are the actors. Chapters 8 to 10 introduce that history, but the meanings of the words 'barbarian' and 'barbarism' are not yet determined and need to be explained.

'Barbarians' – Gibbon or his printer almost always accords them a capital initial – are hostile peoples beyond and upon the frontiers of empire, and are to some extent defined by those frontiers, which, however, run through a diversity of lands and societies. Chapter 8 deals with the Persians, who will threaten Rome's Asian frontiers through the defeats of Valerian and Julian, and a succession of wars down to Chosroes; chapter 9 deals with the Germans and chapter 10 with the Goths, resuming the narrative with the Gothic, Persian and civil wars of the third century. The latter peoples are 'barbarian' in the sense that they are not civilised, whereas the Persians, though 'barbarians,' are not merely civilised, but 'civilised and corrupted';[4]

[1] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 211–12; FDF, pp. 461–2. [2] FDF, pp. 464–6.
[3] For the use of these terms in a formula by La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, many times employed in the present series, see NCG, p. 17.
[4] See below, p. 24.

it is clear that we have shifting meanings before us. The Persians are 'barbarians' in the ancient sense of the word; meaning that they do not speak Greek – or, since Romans adopted Greek culture and its discourse, Latin. They are the original barbarians, defined as such in the classical literature of Hellas: the 'barbarians' of Herodotus, whose mighty deeds deserve to be recorded alongside those of the Greeks;[5] yet at the same time the 'barbarians' of Aristotle, 'slaves by nature' because they do not live in free cities, but are ruled by god-kings living in palaces, who govern them as if they were slaves. What it is that converts this 'as if' into a fact by nature is discussable; by Gibbon's time European jurists and philosophers were inclined to stress the absence of free tenures defensible at law. There was a contrast between the barbarian as free and virile warrior, and the barbarian as servile and effeminate subject of an 'oriental despot'; the latter indeed was a key element in the construction of 'orientalism';[6] and the tension can be found in Gibbon's portrait of the Persians. It was a consequence of the original extension of 'barbarian' and 'barbarism' in an eastward direction from the Mediterranean basin.

The Germans and Goths, and many peoples associated with them, were 'barbarians' in senses exceeding the original meanings of the term. They did not inhabit the polis or the palace, but lived in villages or encampments among forests or open plains; they were 'uncivilised', whatever the meanings of the term thus negated. Their abode was not 'the east' in the 'oriental' sense of the word, but that vast and ill-defined region known in Gibbon's time as 'le nord'.[7] They had been known to fifth-century Athenians as 'Thracians' or 'Scythians', and Herodotus's account of the unending plains of Scythia and the nomadic peoples inhabiting them remained cardinal in descriptions of the non-oriental barbarians until modern times. They were known to be migratory, and Roman experience with Gauls, Cimbri, Teutones and Helvetii had produced a literature pointing out that wars with cities were fought for supremacy, wars with *Volkerwänderungen* for survival; Machiavelli had commented on this distinction.[8] When Gibbon turned from Persians to Germans and Goths, he was employing the term 'barbarian' in a sense no longer Hellenic but neo-Latin: to denote peoples who had migrated and settled in provinces of the Roman empire, conquering less by arms than by cultural change, and inaugurating the millennium of 'barbarism and religion' at the end of which Latin and Greek had been

[5] Below, p. 19, n. 3.
[6] This term requires acknowledgement of the work of Edward Said (1979), though I have not followed him in other respects.
[7] For this concept in Voltaire, see NCG, p. 78. [8] FDF, pp. 222–9.

restored to their classical purity and become instruments of historical criticism and construction.

If the 'oriental' extension of 'barbarism' encountered an image of 'despotism', the northward extension of the term encountered the more problematic concept of 'liberty'. It was known that wild and ungovernable peoples valued their freedom, and the Scythian queen Tomyris had said as much to the Great King Darius; her notion of freedom, however, was unlike that of the Spartans who, it had been explained to another king, feared their law more than any master.[9] In the earliest chapters of the *Decline and Fall* it is said that the freedom of barbarians was incapable of self-discipline,[10] and alongside the concept of a 'state of nature' developed by a succession of philosophers, the historiography of barbarism since Tacitus[11] had developed the premise that liberty was something primordial, to be disciplined and perfected by a relationship with law and authority. In this scenario the 'Gothic' – later and less happily the 'Teutonic' – barbarians came to play a pivotal role, both in political and moral philosophy and in the history of Europe as neo-Latin historical writers came to perceive it. Uncouth and alien to Romans, they came to possess for Europeans what Gibbon once called a 'domestic' significance.[12] Who were the barbarians? They are ourselves. Primeval liberty came to be confronted and reconciled with Roman law, and the ancient problem of *libertas et imperium* was restated. In this process the establishment in the barbarian and feudal kingdoms of free tenures regulated by law played a central part, and by Gibbon's time it had been debated for more than two centuries how far this had been an achievement of Roman law, how far of Frankish, Saxon, Batavian or Gothic free customs;[13] that the debate was irresolvable and unending was the source of its strength. Introducing the barbarians as enemies of empire, Gibbon was at the beginning of a history of Roman-Germanic Europe which he did not intend to narrate because it was already well known; its authority was assured by its contestability.

How migratory peoples, driving their cattle before the wagons bearing their women and children, had become sedentary tenants, bound to the soil or free under law, on arable land where grain was grown for commerce, was a central problem in constructing European history. In solving the problem and creating its value system, the invention of the heavy plough

[9] Herodotus, I, 205–6; in George Rawlinson's translation (1998), pp. 109–13 (Tomyris); VII, 104; p. 544 (Spartans).
[10] Womersley, 1994, I, pp. 32, 33.
[11] For Tacitus's *De moribus Germanorum* in European historiography, see FDF, pp. 262–4.
[12] Below, p. 37. [13] Pocock, 1957 (1987), chs. I, IV; Kelley, 1970.

was seen to be crucial, and was located within a variety of stadial schemes designed to explicate the transition from herding to trading by way of farming. We shall find Gibbon operating more than one of these schemes, of which that developed by his Scottish friends was the most advanced if not necessarily the one he found most useful. It had a peculiar importance in the historiography of barbarism as he came to study the question, because while Germans and Goths were known to be pastoralists, the force that drove them to invade the Roman provinces, where they settled and became ploughmen, was nomadic: the Huns and other shepherd peoples of Central Asia, who had intermittently invaded and settled in Europe. If beyond the frontiers of Roman servile or tenurial agriculture – itself the reason why the legions were no longer free citizen warriors – lay the forests of the German transhumants, beyond them lay the grasslands of the Ukrainian Goths, and beyond them the steppe of the Huns, Avars and Mongols. The stadial sequences of conjectural history could be spatialised as the imagined geography of Eurasia,[14] providing European history with an eastward vista in which the 'orientals' of Iran, Mesopotamia and Egypt played no part. Hunter-gatherer peoples, envisaged in theory from the most ancient stadial schemes, were little to be seen in Roman or European history and played little part in its narratives; it was the relation of herdsman to farmer on which these turned.

(11)

The theme of religion was interwoven with that of barbarism, but arose from different sources and carried different discourses. 'Barbarians' in the language of sacred history were 'gentiles', not because they lived in *gentes* as pre-civilised peoples, but because they were defined by the distinction between them and 'Israel', the people of God to whom the covenant and the law had been revealed. They shared a descent from the peoples wandering the earth after the fall of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues; and since in some narratives Nimrod the builder of the Tower had also been the first ruler by the sword, there was an association between 'gentiles' and the peoples whose empires had been governed from heathen cities: Babylonians and Assyrians, Medes and Persians, who linked but did not identify the history of Israel with that of the Four Empires. These gentiles did not know the God of Israel, and history and philosophy joined in seeking to explain what religion they had and what had shaped it. Before and after the Flood they

[14] A term in modern usage, not employed by Gibbon.

had been aware of God, and it was held that knowledge of him had persisted even though it was corrupt. The natural religion, or *prisca theologia*,[15] of mankind was an almost instinctive monotheism which the mind could not refuse, and it was to this that 'deists' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were suspected of seeking to reduce the faith in revealed truth. In another perspective, it was this that Christian missionaries sought to discover – and were dismayed when they could not find – in the alien belief systems they encountered: a religion of the Father to which they might add a knowledge of the Son. Matteo Ricci's enterprise of proving that Confucian belief was originally a simple theism is a case in point.[16]

Christians scrutinising the remotest antiquity known to them – they were often led to do this by the need to co-ordinate biblical with other chronologies – speculated on what had corrupted the original religion of the gentiles and led God to reveal himself to a peculiar people. A common explanation was euhemerist; heroes, kings and ancestors had been seen as doing the work of God and falsely supposed gods by peoples who had forgotten him. An alternative thesis was that of idolatry; the profusion of false gods worshipped in temples led to the explanation that images erected to a true god had substituted themselves for him.[17] The heathen in his blindness bowed down to wood and stone; but though the images might have been the work of crafty magicians – Christians originated the notion of priestcraft until they found it turned against them – they might also be ascribed to the crudity of the 'barbarous' or 'savage' mind. Humans wandering in ignorance and confusion from the plain of Shinar had lost all knowledge and been obliged to re-imagine the world in darkness; hence the fantasies of superstition. But once primitive religion was supposed to be the simple product of the unaided and unguided human mind, philosophy had come upon the scene, and the history of religion might be a 'philosophic' or 'natural' history of the mind, from a state of 'nature' or of 'savagery' through whatever states of society had succeeded it.

Having become a history of superstition, such a history might also be one of philosophy. Here emphasis veered away from the shepherds of Scythia or the steppe, and settled on the civilisations of the non-Greek east. The beliefs of shepherds might not be the idolatry of savages. In some systems it was held that they had worshipped wind, light and darkness, or the four elements of earth, air, fire and water, by which they were surrounded. This – as Giannone hinted in the *Triregno*[18] – was not far from a Spinozistic

[15] D. Walker, 1972, where it is extended in magian and Neo-Platonic directions.
[16] NCG, pp. 99–100; below, pp. 102–4. [17] Manuel, 1959, 1983. [18] NCG, p. 68.

pantheism (as far back as the thirteenth century, Snorri Sturlason had declared that the heathen Norse supposed the earth a living being and said their prayers to it[19]). It permitted the thought that the 'savage', unable to perceive natural causes, had populated the earth around him with spirits – *daimones*, *atua*, *kami* – with which he was himself linked through his ancestors in a system of animism, so that spirit and matter were one. It was this also, however, that permitted a history of philosophy, situated not among the non-Latin 'barbarians' of the shepherd north, but among the non-Greek 'barbarians' of the city-dwelling but servile east. In a later volume we shall have occasion to notice Enlightened histories which traced philosophy from its beginnings among sages and mages, lawgivers and prophets, who had reduced the multifarious superstitions surrounding them to allegorical expressions of a single ineffable reality – itself the subject of gnosis rather than of revelation – and in making themselves philosophers had become or begotten a new species of priests.

In the succeeding volume, however, we shall find both the early Fathers and their early-modern exponents deeply concerned with the penetration of Christian belief by philosophies like this, and the growth of a Christian philosophy to control it. The moderns asked whether the earliest heresies, Gnosticism and Arianism, had been produced by misapplications of a Platonist idea of creation, or by elements of a Zoroastrian dualism that lay further back and might account for Pythagoras and Plato himself. Here the investigation of 'barbarism' in the Greek sense of the word became an investigation of a non-Greek or pre-Greek 'philosophy' that had played a none too comfortable part in Christian sacred and ecclesiastical history. Gibbon's own studies of barbarism begin with Persia, and entail a study of Zoroaster and his religion that owes much to both Christian and the most recent of *philosophe* writers; and Joseph de Guignes's great history of Eurasia, on which he came increasingly to rely, is a history of both barbarism and the kinds of religion that gave rise to philosophy. To the history of the last-mentioned we shall have to return. Whether the stadial histories of the human mind as progressively engaged in property produced a satisfactory sequence of the stages of religion and philosophy is another matter again. These problems lay before Gibbon as he wrote chapters 8 to 10, and lie before us as we read them.

[19] Faulkes, 1987, pp. 1–2.

CHAPTER 2

Anquetil-Duperron: despotism and prophecy in Sassanid Persia

(1)

This passage opens chapter 8 of the *Decline and Fall*:

> Whenever Tacitus indulges himself in those beautiful episodes, in which he relates some domestic transaction of the Germans or of the Parthians, his principal object is to relieve the attention of the reader from a uniform scene of vice and misery. From the reign of Augustus to the time of Alexander Severus, the enemies of Rome were in her bosom: the tyrants, and the soldiers; and her prosperity had a very distant and feeble interest in the revolutions that might happen beyond the Rhine and the Euphrates. But when the military order had levelled, in wild anarchy, the power of the prince, the laws of the senate, and even the discipline of the camp, the barbarians of the north and of the east, who had long hovered on the frontier, boldly attacked the provinces of a declining monarchy. Their vexatious inroads were changed into formidable irruptions, and, after a long vicissitude of mutual calamities, many tribes of the victorious invaders established themselves in the provinces of the Roman empire. To obtain a clearer knowledge of these great events, we shall endeavour to form a previous idea of the character, forces, and designs of those nations who avenged the cause of Hannibal and Mithridates.[1]

Gibbon's predicament at this point is as follows. The Tacitean explanatory narrative is over; there is nothing to be added to our understanding of how Roman virtue expanded and corrupted itself, and the rise and fall of princes, who are ceasing to be even despots and becoming warlords instead, can add nothing, in consequence, for the time being. The initiative is with the barbarians, who cease to be an external nuisance and become a force making for change; and the history that needs to be written is the history of the barbarians themselves. But the writing of history was not practised by the northern barbarians or in Gibbon's belief by the eastern, and the histories which have come down from antiquity, and which it is the duty of Gibbon as a modern historian to explore, continue to be narratives and

[1] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 213.

portraits of the predominantly futile emperors reigning between Alexander Severus and Diocletian. The three chapters (8 to 10) introduced by the paragraph just quoted are therefore studies of the manners and customs of the barbarous nations, containing relatively little narrative of 'the revolutions that might happen' among them. Because these chapters are in various ways pervaded by Enlightenment understandings of social and religious structure and change, they are nearer to a modern conception of 'history' than are narratives of princely and military actions; but Gibbon remains a humanist, obliged to follow the patterns of Greek and Roman historiography, and 'philosophical' history continues to be reflected in the mirror of princes, even when the latter has been cracked from side to side. Narrative and digression therefore continue to alternate.

Nevertheless, Gibbon is not indulging himself in beautiful episodes, or relieving his reader's attention from the uniform scene of Roman history, when he constructs three chapters on the state of the barbarous peoples; they have become actors on the stage. At the moment when the Severan dynasty, and with it the Augustan principate, could be pronounced extinct, 'barbarians' of two kinds had made their appearance as wearers of the purple. 'Barbarians' who might speak Latin and Greek, but were oriental in their culture, had appeared with the Emesan matriarchs and their sons; 'oriental' because they brought with them palace politics dominated by women and eunuchs, and by the worship of the phallic deities who had tempted the monotheists from Sinai into repeated betrayals of their covenant with the Lord. The prophets had expelled these baalim from Jerusalem, and the censors and senators had banned them from Rome; yet they kept coming back to the holy places, and the ludicrous pornotopia of Elagabalus[2] was in its own way the abomination of desolation, while standing at the same time for the corruption which went with the excess of conspicuous consumption. When the legions or the guards destroyed sons and mothers together, there came to be emperors who were 'barbarians' in the sense then usual: the fierce giant Maximin, Philip the robber from the desert. These were not invading chieftains, but soldiers in the Roman service; the armies had been barbarised (or the warriors civilised) before the barbarians fought their way across the frontiers. But the barbarian soldiers came from the wastelands outside the empire, not from the civilised and corrupt cities which lay mostly, but not wholly, within it.

These 'barbarians' must be bracketed together because it was already a given in the historiography that the end of the Parthian and the advent of

[2] FDF, pp. 458–9.

the Sassanian dynasty had made the Persian empire once more a formidable military adversary, and that renewed large-scale war beyond the Euphrates had coincided with renewed pressure by German-speaking peoples on the Danube and the Rhine. Gibbon was looking towards three climactic military disasters: the defeat of Julian by the Persians; the crossing of the Danube by the Goths and the defeat of Valens at Adrianople; and the collapse of the Rhine frontier in the face of the Goths and Alamanni. There were military, but there were also cultural interconnections between these events; Roman and non-Roman worlds were to be shown interacting; but the decision to group all non-Romans as 'barbarians' tended to pull the word apart into its several meanings. There were Mesopotamians, Iranians and Germans to be dealt with; city-dwellers, plains-dwellers and forest-dwellers; and the resources of classical rhetoric and enlightened philosophy were to be stretched by the attempt. Gibbon was not the first to make the attempt, but the scale on which he made it was his own.

The people of the Persian empire could not well be denied the appellation of 'barbarians', since they had been so described in one of the seminal sentences of European historiography;[3] but it was not denied that they were civilised, and the increasing habit of using 'barbarism' to denote a social condition only one stage removed from 'savagery' was not applicable to them. Gibbon stated his awareness of this.

> In the more early ages of the world, whilst the forest that covered Europe afforded a retreat to a few wandering savages, the inhabitants of Asia were already collected into populous cities, and reduced under extensive empires, the seat of the arts, of luxury, and of despotism.[4]

To historians whom Gibbon read and utilised, the forest was the great Hercynian or Caledonian wood which had grown up after the Flood, and the savages were rather the sons of Japhet engaged in clearance and settlement. Gibbon was amused by this chronology, but was not equipped with an advanced alternative to it.

Among the nations who have adopted the Mosaic history of the world, the ark of Noah has been of the same use as was formerly to the Greeks and Romans the siege of Troy. On a narrow basis of acknowledged truth an immense but rude superstructure of fable has been erected, and the wild Irishman, as well as the

[3] 'These are the researches of Herodotus of Halicarnassus, which he publishes in the hope of thereby preserving from decay the remembrance of what men have done, and of preventing the great and wonderful actions of the Greeks and the Barbarians from losing their due meed of glory.' Herodotus, *History*, 1, 1, in George Rawlinson's translation (1998, p. 3).

[4] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 213.

wild Tartar, could point out the individual son of Japhet, from whose loins his ancestors were lineally descended.[5] The last century abounded with antiquarians of profound learning and easy faith, who by the dim light of legends and traditions, of conjectures and etymologies, conducted the great-grandchildren of Noah from the tower of Babel to the extremities of the globe . . . The learned Rudbeck[6] allows the family of Noah a few years to multiply from eight to about twenty thousand persons. He then disperses them into small colonies to replenish the earth and to propagate the human species. The German or Swedish detachment (which marched, if I am not mistaken, under the command of Askenaz, the son of Gomer, the son of Japhet) distinguished itself by a more than common diligence in the prosecution of this great work. The northern hive cast its swarms over the greatest part of Europe, Africa, and Asia; and (to use the author's metaphor) the blood circulated from the extremities to the heart.[7]

Irish antiquaries claimed a national pedigree from Fathaclan, the son of Magog, the son of Japhet;[8] but behind all this easy fun – though it was only recently that these genealogies had begun to seem ridiculous – Gibbon's starting point is a Germanic world of trans-frontier barbarism, and he need not look back with Pelloutier or Beaufort[9] to a pre-Roman era when the invading northern swarms were all Gauls and Celts. Those peoples were to be relegated to the fringe of the Roman-Germanic historical imagination of 'Europe'. What Gibbon finds amusing is less immediately the authority of Moses than the constructions of humanist philology; but he was not equipped to replace philology with archaeology, and pre-Christian literature offered him no better account of human origins and dispersals.

There is not anywhere upon the globe a large tract of country which we have discovered destitute of inhabitants, or whose first population can be fixed with any degree of historical certainty. And yet, as the most philosophic minds can seldom refrain from investigating the infancy of great nations, our curiosity consumes itself in toilsome and disappointed efforts. When Tacitus considered the purity of the German blood, and the forbidding aspect of the country, he was disposed to pronounce those barbarians *indigenae*, or natives of the soil. We may allow with safety, and perhaps with truth, that ancient Germany was not originally peopled by any foreign colonies already formed into a political society; but that the name and nation received their existence from the gradual union of some wandering savages of the Hercynian woods. To assert those savages to have been

[5] Ibid. 1, p. 233, notes 13 and 14; references to Keating's *History of Ireland* (1723, Womersley, 1994, 111, p. 1231) and Abulghazi's *Genealogical History of the Tartars* (*c.* 1660; Womersley, 1994, 111, p. 1187). For the latter see below, p. 121.

[6] Olaus Rudbeck; see Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 232, 234, nn. 8, 15. Gibbon did not own, and does not otherwise cite, his work, and may have known it only from Bayle's quotations (n. 15).

[7] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 233–4.

[8] Ibid. 1, p. 233, n. 13.

[9] Ibid. 1, p. 231, n. 2; FDF, p. 364; Kidd, 1999, pp. 189–93.

the spontaneous production of the earth which they inhabited would be a rash inference, condemned by religion and unwarranted by reason.[10]

Here we do have the 'savage' as original inhabitant of the European peninsula; but he is less the hunter-gatherer of stadial theory than the Cyclops of Greek thought about pre-civilised man, or the original wanderer in the jurists' state of nature. The context in which he here appears is that of a different problem, that of the origin of the human race in post-biblical thinking. If Gibbon declines to adopt any Stoic or Epicurean theory of spontaneous generation, he rejects equally its Voltairean successor the theory of human polygenesis, from which the racial doctrines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were largely descended; 'the purity of the German blood' has an ominous ring to us, which we need not impute to him. And this thread in the pattern of European racialism has one of its origins in the attempts of scholars to deal with the northern barbarians by supposing them to be the house of Japhet. The house of Shem presented a different series of problems, productive less of racialism than of orientalism; if there is a biblically based racialism in the eighteenth century, it is anti-Hamitic rather than anti-Semitic. Hatred of Jews was widespread and vicious, but not yet racially based, and could not be aimed at the house of Shem, to which Jesus Christ had belonged after the flesh.

There existed a mass of chronological learning which offered to deduce Nineveh, Babylon and Egypt from the Tower of Babel and the Confusion of Tongues. Gibbon says nothing of this, but he offers no anthropological explanation of how western Asia became the scene of urban despotism when northern Europe was that of forest savagery. The sentence in which he states this antithesis therefore forms a starting point, at which he silently adopts the paradigm of 'oriental despotism'.[11] Since Aeschylus and Herodotus in the fifth century, it had been thought sufficient to assume that Mesopotamian peoples were subject to god-kings living in great palaces, who ruled them as if they were slaves, if they did not actually own them as chattels or serfs. There was of course an ambiguity here: to Aristotle orientals were slaves because they were not citizens, and were ruled by others because they did not rule themselves. To pronounce them on this account slaves in the household of their ruler could therefore be more a metaphorical than a literal statement, but the image was heightened in the minds of Renaissance Europeans by a detailed if inexact acquaintance with the extensive slave-households of the Mameluke and Ottoman empires, which could be equated with the courts of western kings when rhetoric

[10] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 233. [11] Venturi, 1972, pp. 41–51; Richter, 1973; Said, 1979.

required it. Living in feudal and post-feudal societies, furthermore, scholars of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries had become deeply concerned with how the proprietor of realty and personalty might claim to be free when he was not his ruler's equal partner in government; and Bodin, Harrington, Montesquieu and many others had developed complex antitheses between the allodial or feudal hereditary freeholds, deriving equally from Roman and Germanic origins, in which western Europeans held their lands and goods, and the precarious or servile tenures-at-will supposedly characteristic of the 'oriental' from Muscovy to Egypt and from Algiers to Cathay. It was a profound fissure in the image of 'barbarian' society, which explains why Gibbon's 'fierce giants of the north' were enabled to become the parents of liberty, while his 'barbarians of the east' would remain entrapped in the stereotype of 'oriental despotism'.

The last-mentioned paradigm has little room for change, contradiction or growth, and it is easy to think that the palace of one semi-divine despot is much like that of another.[12] Perhaps this is why western political analysis often moves up to the fringe of analysis of government centred on the court or palace, only to recoil the moment it suggests the divans and seraglios of oriental fantasy. It may also be why it has always been easier to write about the palace-bred monsters of the Augustan principate than about the provinces which they peaceably governed; precisely because it is seen as despotic, the palace becomes a self-contained world, lacking any apparent connection with the social structures constituting its empire. This was to be a problem for Gibbon when he came to write about Byzantine history. More generally by far, we may have come upon the reason why western social and historical analysis typically avoids those structures which it sees as despotic, and from which it can elicit no pattern of development; the reason why it writes its history as having as little to do as possible with the great cities and divine kings of Mesopotamia and Egypt. We have already noticed Adam Smith's insistence that the Mediterranean polis was founded by horse-riding shepherds recently arrived from the steppe; and the freeholding agrarian societies of Europe were held to be the creation of Goths by scholars of the seventeenth century, and of Indo-Germanic Aryans by those of the nineteenth.[13] Historiographically, it has been the function of the northern barbarian to ride through the watersheds of the great river valleys, carrying history in his saddlebags and leaving the 'barbarians' celebrated by Herodotus isolated in the stagnation of oriental despotism. This

[12] NCG, pp. 353–4. [13] Burrow, 1966.

pattern is broadly true of Gibbon's eighth to tenth chapters, and of the *Decline and Fall* as a whole.

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The Persian empire, however, both before and after its forcible but partial hellenisation by the Macedonians, presented an anomalous image in terms of this paradigm. On its western side, best known to the Greeks and Romans, it was Mesopotamian and could be viewed as consisting of huge cities lacking a political nervous system, whose invertebrate and effeminate inhabitants were ruled by despots in the palace and priests in the temple. The fact that these were cities of merchants and craftsmen made them all the more the capitals of 'extensive empires, the seat of the arts, of luxury, and of despotism', but their vast weight could not subdue the virtue of the hoplite republics to their west, or of Macedon and Rome succeeding Babylon and the Medes in the scheme of the Four Empires.

> Followed, as it is said, by two millions of *men*, Xerxes, the descendant of Cyrus, invaded Greece. Thirty thousand *soldiers*, under the command of Alexander, the son of Philip, who was intrusted by the Greeks with their glory and revenge, were sufficient to subdue Persia.[14]

But east of the Tigris river lay a region of highlands and plateaux, inhabited not by city-dwellers who might be considered the natural subjects of despotism, but by Iranians and more distantly by Scythians who did not fit the paradigm so easily. The mounted nobility of Persia were formidable people, and the Macedonian invaders had spent much time seeking their alliance and wondering at the same time why these proud and independent men prostrated themselves before kings in the *proskynesis*. Only life in the polis, it seemed to Aristotle, could save even the strongest of warriors from servility; but the problem confronting Herodotus had been that of depicting the empire of Xerxes as at once a palace-centred despotism herding its slaves into battle, and the focus of loyalties for a nobility taught to ride, shoot and tell the truth. To French *nobiliaire* writers at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, the palace of Versailles presented some not dissimilar problems, and the despotism whose principle is fear was formidable to the mind of Montesquieu precisely because it was so closely juxtaposed with the monarchy whose principle is honour. Uzbek the traveller[15] thought he

[14] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 214. Gibbon's italics.
[15] The central figure, or anti-hero, of Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes*.

was a gentleman till he discovered that he was a despot. Gibbon did not explore this philosophical problem, posed by the duality of Persia under western eyes, but he faced the challenge of explaining why the reviving Sassanids should have been as threatening as they were to the disintegrating Severi, and here the oriental paradigm caused difficulties.

Artaxerxes or Ardashir, the Sassanid restorer, was a legislator who understood the structure of physiocratic monarchy[16] and whose code lasted until the Arab conquest; but Gibbon could not resolve the problem presented by the two faces of the Persian system, or add anything significant to the account given by Herodotus. On the one hand, Persia at war was an oriental despotism, its camp[17] a moving palace surrounded by servile and over-taxed common soldiers; on the other, its Iranian hinterland supplied it with two formidable reserves of cavalry. There were the highly mobile mounted archers whose arrow tactics took their name from the Parthians, 'an obscure horde of Scythian origin',[18] who had displaced the Greek Seleucids and defeated the Romans at Carrhae, and differed little from the Scythians who had baffled Cyrus in the sixth century BC. In them the nomads of the steppe assert their historical importance for the first time in the *Decline and Fall*. Secondly, there were the mounted nobility, the heavy mailed lancers whom the Roman legionaries called by a nickname almost translatable as 'tanks' (*clibanarii*, from the word for a portable oven). It was a powerful combination, but according to all classical literature a citizen infantry should outdo it in every kind of virtue, and as the Roman armies degenerated they became less able to cope with such cavalry in becoming more like them. Gibbon was thus unable to separate the image of Persian power from the image of oriental weakness, or to overcome the paradox involved.

> The Persians, long since civilised and corrupted,[19] were very far from possessing the martial independence and the intrepid hardiness, both of mind and body, which have rendered the northern barbarians masters of the world. The science of war, that constituted the more rational force of Greece and Rome, as it now does of Europe, never made any considerable progress in the East. Those disciplined evolutions which harmonise and animate a confused multitude were unknown to the Persians. They were equally unskilled in the arts of constructing, besieging, or defending regular fortifications.[20] They trusted more to their courage than to their discipline. The infantry was a half-armed spiritless crowd of peasants, levied

[16] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 221–2, 228.
[17] Ibid. 1, p. 223, n. 41, for a parallel account of the camp of the Mogul emperor.
[18] Ibid. 1, p. 214.
[19] It is thus possible to be barbarian and civilised at the same time.
[20] This is challenged by modern scholarship; see Luttwak, 1976, pp. 135, 163.

in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat. The monarch and his nobles transported into the camp the pride and luxury of the seraglio. Their military operations were impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses and camels, and in the midst of a successful campaign the Persian host was often separated or destroyed by an unexpected famine.

But the nobles of Persia, in the midst of luxury and despotism, preserved a strong sense of personal gallantry and national honour. From the age of seven years they were taught to speak truth, to shoot with the bow, and to ride; and it was universally confessed that in the two last of these arts they had made a more than common proficiency. The most distinguished youth were educated under the monarch's eye, practised their exercises in the gate of his palace, and were severely trained up to the habits of temperance and obedience in their long and laborious parties of hunting. In every province the satrap maintained a like school of military virtue. The Persian nobles (so natural is the idea of feudal tenures) received from the king's bounty lands and houses, on the condition of their service in war. They were ready at the first summons to mount on horseback, with a martial and splendid train of followers, and to join the numerous bodies of guards who were carefully selected from amongst the most robust slaves, and the bravest adventurers of Asia. These armies, both of light and heavy cavalry, equally formidable by the impetuosity of their charge, and the rapidity of their motions, threatened, as an impending cloud, the eastern provinces of the declining empire of Rome.[21]

Oriental or feudal, despotic or aristocratic, this account of the Persian state is as valid, we learn from Gibbon's footnotes,[22] in the age of Ammianus Marcellinus as in that of Herodotus. But if there is no essential difference between Xerxes and Artaxerxes, Gibbon is thrown back on the question why the hoplites of the west are no longer what they were at Marathon; and we know the answer by now. It is not clear that the barbarians of the east are capable of historical change; even their corruption is timeless, and there is a possible contradiction here. If 'orientals' are slaves by nature, as some ancients and moderns have contended, they have no virtue to corrupt.

(III)

But there are several earlier pages in which Gibbon examines Persian civilisation from another point of view. The Sassanid dynasty which came to power in the time of Alexander Severus was held to have re-established Zoroastrian Magianism as the religion of state, and this called for some investigation of the role of prophecy and priesthood in the structure of an empire presumed to have been despotic. Gibbon's account of Zoroaster and his sacred books forms one of his few ventures into remote antiquity and

[21] Womersley, 1994, I, pp. 228–9; the close of chapter 8. [22] Ibid. I, ch. 8 nn. 56–8.

the history of the 'Axial Age'; only when he comes to deal with Plato will we find him going there again, and his treatment of these figures must be considered as part of his general understanding of the history of both philosophy and religion. To that we shall return at a later point, but there are some features of his account of Zoroaster which should be emphasised now.

He draws on two works of scholarship, the differences between which exhibit his place in the history of a key branch of erudition. Gibbon was both an Anglican and an orientalist *manqué*; his account of his disappointment with Oxford[23] points to a kind of learning which he could have expected to find still flourishing when he went up. Thomas Hyde, the author of *De Veterum Persarum Religionis Historia*, had worked with Brian Walton on the project for a polyglot Bible which was one of the means by which Anglican theology had kept itself alive during the English Interregnum;[24] like Edward Pococke, another important source in Gibbon's readings,[25] he was one of those learned in Arabic, Syrian and other west Asian languages who had been singled out at Oxford by Laudian patronage,[26] and had this school remained vital the young Gibbon might have attached himself to it. It had been a deficiency in Hyde's learning, however, that he was unacquainted with the ancient Persian written languages, and that the treatise called the *Sadder*, which he had translated into Latin, was of a much more recent date. There is an 'Arabian' or 'oriental' flavour to a single sentence of his preface, which deserves to be rescued for inclusion in the literature of historiography:

> Celeberrimus ille *Camusi* Auctor *Phirozabadius*, pro grande suo Opere Apologiam attexens, in sua Praefatione addit:
> Homo est Locus Oblivionis, cum sane Primus Obliviscens fuit Primus Homo.[27]
>
> [The celebrated author, Pherozabadius of Camus, prefixing an apologia to his great work, observes in his preface:
> Man is the place of forgetting, since the first forgetter was the first man.][28]

Gibbon was unsure of the reliability of his sources, but the second text on which he drew for his knowledge of Zoroaster belonged to another

[23] EEG, pp. 43–9.
[24] DNB, s.v. 'Hyde, Thomas (1636–1703)', 'Walton, Brian or Bryan (1600?–1661).' Both were Cambridge men who withdrew to Oxford during the Interregnum, Hyde as a very young man.
[25] DNB, s.v. 'Pococke, Edward (1604–91)'. Gibbon says he had as a child begun to read his Latin translation of Abu'l Faraj (Abulpharagius). The surname is not a common one, and the present author may be allowed to say that he claims no descent from the orientalist, who was appointed to his Oxford readership by Laud himself.
[26] Toomer, 1996. [27] Hyde, 1700, 'Praefatio'. [28] Trans. JGAP.

world than Hyde's. This was the French translation of the *Zend-Avesta*, published in 1771 by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron. Gibbon in his autobiographies does not mention Anquetil, then returned to Paris and working on the edition he published eight years later,[29] among those members and associates of the *Académie des Inscriptions* whose company he sought in 1763,[30] but he had heard of Anquetil's travels by the previous December.[31] Turning from Hyde to Anquetil and the *Académie*, Gibbon passed at a step from the 'oriental' learning of the church of England to that of an antiquarian Enlightenment more curious than destructive, and there are passages in Anquetil's preface which show Gibbon at the door of a new universe of anthropology.

> Eh! Pourquoi craindrois-je de produire mes foibles efforts, lorsque l'objet qui les a fait naître est le plus digne d'occuper l'être pensant; lorsque le peu de matériaux que j'ai tâché de rassembler peuvent servir à commencer un édifice, la connoissance de l'homme, lequel ne demande pour être achevé qu'une main plus habile, qu'un bras plus fort et plus courageux?
>
> L'homme, le centre en quelque sorte de la Nature, l'être qui nous intéresse le plus, qui nous touche de plus près, dont la connoissance est la base de nos opérations, de toutes nos autres connoissances; l'homme, étudié, ou du moins vû et pratiqué depuis l'origine du Monde, n'est guère plus connu qu'au moment de sa création. On a mesuré les astres, sondé les abîmes de la mer, parcouru toute l'étendue du Globe, et determiné sa forme; on a surpris le secret de la Nature dans ses productions, dans les loix qui réglent son cours: tout cela est pour l'homme, et l'homme est ignoré.
>
> Deux routes peuvent nous conduire à la connoissance de cet être si intéressant: l'inspection de sa nature: ce qu'il peut, ce qu'il doit être; la vûe de ses opérations: ce qu'il est.
>
> La Métaphysique, suivant la premiere route, décompose l'homme, analyse ses facultés, leur puissance, leurs rapports; combine ces rapports, calcule les opérations qui peuvent en résulter. Après tout ce travail, l'être qui sort de ses mains n'est qu'un automate, capable d'un petit nombre de mouvemens assignés par le Machiniste, habile, il est vrai, mais infiniment au-dessous de la Nature; et la Philosophe, au sortir des spéculations les plus fines, se trouve souvent aussi neuf au milieu des hommes, quand il a à traiter avec eux, ou qu'il veut simplement les considérer, que s'il s'étoit jusqu'alors occupé de tout autre être que de l'homme.
>
> L'Histoire procede differemment; elle nous montre l'homme en action, c'est-à-dire, tel qu'il est; seul moyen propre à nous en donner une connoissance exacte.[32]

[29] Anquetil, 1771.
[30] A, pp. 201–2 (Memoir B), 261–2 (Memoir C), *Journal A*, p. 188.
[31] MW, v, p. 287.
[32] Anquetil, 1771, 1; *Préface* (separately paginated preceding the *Discours Preliminaire*), pp. vi–vii. The reader is reminded that I follow eighteenth-century typography in transcribing quotations; it is not always consonant with modern spelling or accentuation.

[Well! Why should I fear to bring forth my feeble efforts, when the aim that has brought them to birth is the most worth the attention of a thinking being; when the scanty materials I have sought to bring together may serve as foundation for a project, the knowledge of man, whose completion calls only for a hand more skilful, an arm stronger and more daring?

Man, in some sort the centre of Nature, the being who interests us most and touches us most closely, the knowledge of whom is at the basis of our actions and all other knowledge; man, studied or at least perceived and worked on since the beginning of the world, is scarcely better known than at the moment of his creation. We have calculated the stars, sounded the depths of the sea, explored the extent of the globe and determined its geography; we have uncovered the secrets of Nature in all her products, according to the laws which govern her course; all this is done for man, and man remains unknown.

There are two paths leading us to the knowledge of this being who so much concerns us: the inspection of his nature, that which he can and ought to be; the view of his actions, that which he is.

Metaphysics pursues the first path; it decomposes man, analyses his faculties, their capacity and relationships; and by combining these, calculates the operations which can result from them. After all this toil, the being that emerges is no more than an automaton, capable of a small number of movements assigned him by his Maker; skilful indeed, but infinitely inferior to Nature; and the philosopher, at the end of his most refined speculations, often finds himself as much a stranger among men, when he has to interact with them or wishes merely to study them, as if he had till now been preoccupied with quite another being.

History operates differently; it shows us man in action, that is to say as he is; the only way for us to acquire exact knowledge of him.][33]

This is much the world of the *Essai sur l'Etude de la Littérature*;[34] but when Gibbon thought of metaphysics he envisaged something more idealist and less automatist than this, Platonic rather than Cartesian or Condillacian. What Anquetil had in mind was by no means incompatible with Catholic piety or Mosaic chronology, as de Guignes may serve to show; but his is an anthropocentric universe. He proceeds to say that there are two kinds of history, 'celle des opinions, de l'esprit humain, et celle des evénements'[35] (that of opinions – of the human mind – and that of events). The weakness of the latter is that events occur, and must be narrated, too rapidly to be set in the contexts which give them their meaning; but these contexts can be derived, apparently exclusively, from a single field of study, that of 'l'Histoire des Opinions Religieuses'.

[33] Trans. JGAP, as are all quotations in this chapter.
[34] Note that Sainte-Palaye's 'ce qu'il a fait' has here become 'tel qu'il est'.
[35] Anquetil, 1771, 1, p. vii.

L'attachement de secte, augmenté par la caractere divin imprimé à ces opinions, les transmet plus surement. Le zéle religieux, après avoir soumis des peuples nombreux, les retient long-tems sous une sorte de joug, dans une même posture qu'il est plus facile de saisir et d'exprimer. D'ailleurs il n'est plus question de recueillir des oui-dire souvent incertains, de concilier des relations quelquefois opposées, fondées sur ces oui-dire; les Auteurs mêmes de ces opinions, de ces religions, ont soin de les consigner à la posterité en les confiant à leurs sectateurs, ou du moins ceux-ci, en les développant à leurs disciples.[36]

[Association in sects, reinforced by the divine character impressed on these opinions, guarantees their transmission. Religious zeal, having subjected a numerous people, keeps them long under a kind of yoke, in a single disposition easy to capture and describe. Furthermore it is not just a question of collecting often uncertain traditions, or reconciling the sometimes conflicting narratives founded upon them. The original authors of these doctrines and religions are at pains to transmit them to posterity by confiding them to their intimates; or the latter have done the same by expounding them to their disciples.]

Machiavelli had ranked the founders of religions even above those of cities and kingdoms, and the reason in Anquetil's mind has become that they founded the systems of belief and discourse which stabilise human behaviour in durable structures of historical intelligibility. The sages and prophets are not the authors of mystery so much as the givers of law and language, and as their followers expand and impose their beliefs they alter the speech and action of human societies.

Et de-là l'obligation de recourir aux Ouvrages originaux, d'apprendre les langues dans lesquelles ils sont écrits, d'en fixer l'époque, de rechercher celle des variétés qu'ils ont souffertes, des monumens en pierres ou autres qui en font mention, des peuples dont ils ont fait la Loi: de-là l'obligation de suivre les migrations de ces peuples, de connoître exactement les païs où ils se sont fixés, les noms mêmes des lieux particuliers qu'ils ont habités; d'observer leur habileté dans les sciences, dans les arts; d'étudier leur morale, leur politique. Tout cela mene à la connoissance de l'esprit de l'homme, et tient à l'Histoire des opinions, sur-tout de celles auxquelles, comme je l'ai dit, la religion a imprimeé un caractere sacré.[37]

[Hence we are obliged to return to the original writings, to learn the languages in which they were set down, to date them, to seek out the variation they have undergone, the inscriptions in stone or other materials which make mention of them, the peoples whose law they have become; to follow the migrations of these peoples, to determine exactly the lands in which they have settled, the names of the very places in which they have lived; to take note of their advances in the sciences and arts; to study their moral and political laws. All this leads to the knowledge of human culture, and arises from the history of opinions, above all of those to which, as I have said, religion has imparted a sacred character.]

[36] Ibid. pp. viii–ix. [37] Ibid. p. ix.

Gibbon had Anquetil before him when he wrote of the Zoroastrian religion:

> A short delineation of that celebrated system will be found useful, not only to display the character of the Persian nation, but to illustrate many of their most important transactions, both in peace and war, with the Roman empire.[38]

But he had no intention of ceasing to write *l'histoire des evénements*, or of devoting himself to the *académicien*'s new *science de l'homme*. The intellectual excitement we sense in these passages had moved Anquetil to enlist as a soldier in the service of the Compagnie des Indes, equipped with two shirts, two handkerchiefs, a spare pair of stockings,[39] and some letters of introduction, and to spend six years in the French possessions in India, just as these were being overrun by the British. After travels whose frustrations he describes in the greatest detail,[40] he was possessed of the Parsi scriptures and a knowledge of Zend and Pahlevi sufficient to translate them, but was constrained to take passage in an English ship bearing French prisoners to Portsmouth. He then visited Oxford – he gives a hilarious account of being conducted round the Bodleian and Radcliffe manuscripts by two justly caricaturable dons in the rain[41] – and returned to Paris to encode his field work. The experience gives rise to a utopia. Anquetil delineates a new academy or 'Corps de Missionaires littéraires', a band of apostles sent into all lands, not to teach but to learn the languages, laws and opinions given to all nations by their great prophetic lawgivers; but he concludes:

> Vaine espérance, projet chimérique! mon Académie n'existera jamais: et les hommes, accoutumés à leurs erreurs ou effrayés du travail que demanderoient de pareilles recherches, se nourriront de systêmes, de portraits de fantaisie, et continueront de tout étudier, de tout connoître, excepté l'homme.[42]
>
> [A vain hope, a chimerical project! My Academy will never exist; and men, inured to their errors or terrified of the labour which such research demands, will feed upon systems and imaginary portraits, and will continue to study everything and know everything, save only man.]

This was the point from which Anquetil went on to carry out the great and generous projects of his middle and later years: the assaults on the Eurocentric paradigms of 'oriental despotism' (in his *Legislation Orientale* of 1778) and 'American degeneracy' (in his *Considérations . . . sur les Deux*

[38] Womersley, 1994, I, p. 216.
[39] Anquetil, 1771, *Discours Préliminaire*, I, p. vii. His friends intervened to secure his discharge and his freedom of action.
[40] His account of his travels fills the remainder of vol. I of the *Zend-Avesta*.
[41] Anquetil, 1771, *Discours Préliminaire*, I, pp. cccclvi–cccclxii.
[42] Anquetil, 1771, I, *Préface*, pp. xi–xvi.

Mondes of 1780–1804);[43] and to end his days as a species of holy man in Napoleonic Paris, living on bread, cheese, milk and well-water, while working on a translation of the Upanishads and tranquilly awaiting the dissolution of his soul and body.[44] But his detestation of European imperialism in India had produced a denunciation of British national character as well as colonial practice, and to this the usually amiable William Jones, who became the first of British orientalists, had replied with at least equal chauvinism.[45] Gibbon was greatly to admire the work of Jones and his Royal Asiatic Society, whose translations from the Sanskrit opened up a new world of Eurasian cultural history and led to the great debate over the role of 'oriental' learning in British policy for the rule of India.[46] There was a new world of Asian studies open before Gibbon, but it remained to be seen what events and the narrative of events would do with the history of language, opinion and religion.

The problem of despotism at this point recurred, and with it the problem of intolerance. We have seen how an empire of polytheism, conducting a commerce of gods as of goods and manners, could be benignly ruled by a sceptical magistracy; but Artaxerxes had lost no time in convening a great council of the magi and codifying their faith, and had proceeded to a general prosecution of 'the polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks ... the more stubborn Jews and Christians ... [and] the heretics of their own nation and religion', among whom the ambiguous but momentous name of Mani is to be found.[47] There was a double problem here. It was part of the paradigm of despotism that the slavish orientals were ruled as absolutely by priests as by kings; but priests need be no more than ingenious manipulators of idols, prodigies and the superstitions of the multitude. Intolerance was another matter, attached to dogma rather than cult and persecuting opinion when it could be stated and defended as proposition. 'Mr. Hume, in the Natural History of Religion, sagaciously remarks that the most refined and philosophic sects are constantly the most intolerant.'[48] The history of persecution was to be sought in that of philosophy rather than of idolatry; leaving behind the innocuous idols of the Mediterranean basin, Gibbon encountered in Zoroastrianism the first religion which could be codified into a law and attempt to set laws for the mind. He turned towards remote antiquity in order to study Zoroaster as a legislator, but with a good deal less

[43] Abbatista, 1993.
[44] Minuti, 1975, p. 40, n. 21. See further Abbatista, 1993, pp. cxx–cxxiii.
[45] Cannon, 1990, pp. 42–4. Cf. Mukherjee, 1968, Cannon and Brine, 1995.
[46] Stokes, 1959. [47] Womersley, 1994, I, pp. 220–1; see Gibbon's n. 29.
[48] Ibid., n. 24. See NCG, pp. 194–5.

than Anquetil's veneration for such a figure; and finding himself outside the world of the Greeks, had to consider how the same man could be prophet, philosopher and lawgiver at once. To elevate him as culture-hero would not be sufficient.

> The great fundamental article of the system was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles; a bold and injudicious attempt of Eastern philosophy to reconcile the existence of moral and physical evil with the attributes of a beneficent Creator and Governor of the world. The first and original Being, in whom, or by whom, the universe exists, is denominated in the writings of Zoroaster, *Time without bounds*; but it must be confessed that this infinite substance seems rather a metaphysical abstraction of the mind, than a real object endowed with self-consciousness, or possessed of moral perfections. From either the blind or the intelligent operation of this infinite Time, which bears but too near an affinity with the Chaos of the Greeks, the two secondary but active principles of the universe were from all eternity produced; Ormusd and Ahriman, each of them possessed of the powers of creation, but each disposed, by his invariable nature, to exercise them with different designs. The principle of good is eternally absorbed in light; the principle of evil eternally buried in darkness.[49]

In the writings translated by Anquetil, it seems more probable that the good and evil principles have existed together from all eternity, Ahriman being concealed in Ormusd's shadow; the pre-existence of undifferentiated being may be a later importation. But it is significant that Gibbon should have followed it here, since we shall find that it incorporated Zoroastrianism into a general account of the ancient cosmogonies, at once religion and philosophy, which both orthodox and sceptical writers held to have grown up together in remote antiquity, and to have formed what they termed the *prisca theologia* in what we term the 'Axial Age'.[50] This history of philosophy is crucial to Gibbon's understanding of the history of religion, and his use of it in chapter 8 establishes it in the text of the *Decline and Fall* as early as 1776. Its immediate function is to assert the philosophical character of Persian religion, as the achievement of wise men struggling, however injudiciously, with the problem of creation and the problem of evil. Such a religion – Anquetil would call it a *loi* – is the very antithesis of polytheism, as Gibbon proceeds to make clear; it is the worship of abstract principles of being, not of the exterior objects which symbolise them. This we might suppose to be rational and enlightened, but the matter does not end there.

[49] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 216.

[50] For Anquetil's account of the 'Axial Age,' see *Zend-Avesta*, 11, pp. 6–8. He makes Zoroaster a mid-sixth-century contemporary of Lycurgus, Solon, Fo (or Buddha), Confucius and Pherecydes, the Phoenician teacher of Pythagoras. At this point he does attribute to Zoroaster a doctrine of 'le *Tems sans Bornes* (l'Eternel)'.

> Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience, by enjoining practices of devotion; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts.[51]

This is why every prophet must be a legislator; it is an open question what he may have prophesied in the first place. He must enact and establish both a ritual and a moral (a positive natural) law; but the danger is that the symbolic obediences contained in the former may transform the philosophers who inculcate the latter into priests, by giving them a more than magisterial authority to enforce both. Zoroaster was not immune from this danger. There is much to be said for his legislation; it did not enjoin celibacy, so that magi were never monks, and it commanded both holy men and kings to respect the labours of agriculture.[52] Had this been all, 'his name would deserve a place with those of Numa and Confucius';[53] but he erected the magi or 'destours' into a hierarchy, enjoined the faithful to obey them implicitly – apparently on the grounds that they possessed the keys of heaven – and to pay them a regular tithe, 'besides the less invidious possession of a large tract of the most fertile lands of Media'. There is an obvious analogy with the Levites here, and we find one of Gibbon's nicely balanced innuendoes.

> The divine institution of tithes exhibits a singular instance of conformity between the law of Zoroaster and that of Moses. Those who cannot otherwise account for it, may suppose, if they please, that the Magi of the latter times inserted so useful an interpolation into the writings of their prophet.[54]

But the reader of course knows better. The account of Sassanid persecution which follows has now a material as well as a psychological explanation. Priests persecute in order to maintain the authority which they have acquired, and they have acquired it because the logic of prophecy turns philosophers into priests. The mere manipulation of images is nothing in comparison; the city cults of the Greeks and Romans lacked ruling priesthoods because the Hellenic and Latin west had been neither blessed nor cursed with sages and prophets revealing the cosmogonies of systematic reason; and magian religions bred persecuting priesthoods precisely because they originated in the philosophic rejection of polytheism. Western Asia, which Europeans call 'the Orient' and 'the East', was the homeland of such religions, just as it was supposedly the homeland of despotic monarchies, but it might seem that the two phenomena were at variance. To a Protestant

[51] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 218. [52] Ibid. [53] Ibid., p. 219. [54] Ibid., and n. 19.

it was rather obvious that the magi might rival the power of the Great King, and that tithes might be a detention of the things due to Caesar under the false pretence that they belonged to God. It was equally obvious, however, that the popish clergy were the allies of absolute monarchy, and all Gibbon has to say here is that the

> spirit of persecution reflects dishonour on the religion of Zoroaster; but as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy, by uniting the various inhabitants of Persia in the bands of religious zeal.[55]

Had the persecuted religions been organised to make their own claims to civil authority, the horrors of religious war would have ensued; but Persia would not have been a despotism.

In Anquetil we find a different account of Zoroaster's turn towards persecution. He was not concerned with the Sassanid consolidation, but with the tale that the prophet had incited King Gustasp of Balkh to war against the heathen Turanians and perhaps perished himself in the conflict. In this connection, Anquetil found himself weighing the view that Zoroaster was a fraudulent prophet like Muhammad against the view that he was a benign sage and legislator. He concluded that Zoroaster was not a mere magician and wonder-worker, but:

> Pour ce qui est de l'enthousiasme et de l'imposture, je pense qu'on ne peut en disculper Zoroastre. J'appelle Enthousiaste celui qui, persuadé d'une verité ou d'une erreur, marque pour elle un zéle exclusif, et la propose, sans avoir pour cela une mission divine, comme d'une excellence supérieure à tout, et d'une necessité indispensable. L'enthousiasme, pris dans ce sense, renferme les fanatiques en Religion comme en Philosophie et en Politique. Tout homme qui de son Cabinet s'érige un Tribunal, d'où il prétend gouverner le genre humain, réformer les opinions, régler les goûts, je ne crains pas de l'appeller Enthousiaste.
>
> Or il y en a de deux especes: les uns commencent par l'imposture, et finissent par la bonne foi. Des vûes de fortune, une ambition démesurée, le desir de s'élever au dessus du malheur d'une naissance basse et obscure, font faire des efforts qui réussissent. Ce succés, soutenu par des éloges enchanteurs, éblouït, et persuade quelque fois à un homme dont la tête est affoiblie par le travail ce qui, quelques années auparavant, lui auroit paru ridicule. De cette façon, à force de répéter les choses, et de les voir crues, on se les persuade à soi-même.
>
> L'autre espece d'enthousiasme naît de la bonne foi, qui cede ensuite à l'imposture. Plein de certaines opinions favorites, vraies ou fausses, on croit rendre service au genre humain en les lui proposant. D'abord l'enthousiasme tire un voile sur les supercheries que l'on se permet pour les faire adopter. Bientôt la contradiction fait disparoître l'Apôtre: l'amour propre prend la place de celui de la vérité, et l'homme

[55] Ibid., 1, p. 221.

ne combat plus que pour èviter la honte de plier ou d'avoir été trompé. L'Histoire de tous les Peuples ne nous montre que trop de personnages de ces deux caracteres. Le dernier me paroît celui de Zoroastre.[56]

[As for enthusiasm and imposture, I think Zoroaster cannot be discharged of guilt. I call him an enthusiast, who, persuaded of a truth or a falsity, displays exclusive zeal for it and, not authorised by any divine mission, claims for it absolute truth and irresistible authority. Enthusiasm in this sense makes men fanatics in religion, just as in philosophy or politics. When a man from his private cell sets up a tribunal and claims to govern the human race, reform its opinions and regulate its choices, I do not hesitate to call him an enthusiast.

There are two kinds. One begins in imposture and ends in sincerity. The prospect of fortune, boundless ambition, the will to rise above some birth base and obscure, drive one to efforts crowned with success. This triumph, upheld by bewitching praise from his supporters, sometimes dazzles and persuades a man exhausted by his labours of the truth of something he would have found ridiculous a few years earlier. In this way, by repeating his assertions and seeing them believed, he comes to persuade himself of them.

The other kind of enthusiasm begins in good faith and ends in imposture. Filled with one's darling beliefs, true or false, one believes it a service to the human race to propound them. At first, enthusiasm draws a veil over the deceptions one permits oneself in getting them accepted. Soon the contradiction between them annihilates the apostle; self-conceit takes the place of truth, and the man fights only to avoid the shame of giving way or admitting himself deceived. The history of all peoples is too full of examples of both characters. The latter seems to me to have been the case with Zoroaster.]

His preaching of an intolerant crusade was no more than the attempt to save himself from the dilemma in which he was imprisoned by the enterprise of reducing the multifarious sects of Iran to a single system of truth. The danger facing Anquetil is that all the great systems of law and language in which man makes himself known to men may have been codified and rendered permanent by the same grammar of enthusiasm, imposture and self-deceit; perhaps all legislators were false prophets and all discourses hegemonic.[57] But this theory of 'enthusiasm' represents it as no more than the fanaticism and false consciousness of the tunnel vision; in Gibbon, for whom 'enthusiasm' is a key word, we shall find a much more complex account of its genesis. It would also seem that Anquetil, enlightened in a Catholic culture, is not giving the etiology of priesthoods the place which any Protestant would have accorded it at the centre of his historical system; Gibbon was drawn instantly and magnetically to

[56] Anquetil, 1771, II, pp. 65–6.

[57] Tominaga Nakagawa, a very young gentleman at Osaka, had raised similar possibilities with regard to the Confucian and Buddhist classics during the 1730s. See Najita, 1987.

the authority by which the 'destours' (clerics) claimed tithes. Two years after the appearance of the first volume of the *Decline and Fall*, Anquetil published his *Législation Orientale*, remembered today as one of the first full-scale assaults on the paradigm of oriental despotism.[58] He denied with fervour and generosity that 'orientals' were 'slaves by nature', affirming that where west Asian monarchs ruled despotically, it was in defiance of the structures of Muslim, Hindu and Parsi law which protected the subject's property as expressly as the Roman or the feudal. In this he had been preceded by Voltaire, and was to be followed by Burke.[59] But it was one thing to deny that Asians were naturally servile, another to deny that their nature had been rendered servile by the corruptions of despotism. We see already how the 'oriental' paradigm impeded Gibbon's understanding of Persian civilisation; but before it could be eliminated, something would have to replace the companion paradigm of 'priestcraft', of which Gibbon possessed a more complex perception than did Anquetil, one only partly to be explained by the Eurocentricities of 'orientalism'. The history of west Asian society, however, belongs to Gibbon's thinking on the subject of religion. His thinking on that of barbarism will from this point be pursued as part of the history of peoples north of the Danube and east of the Dniester.

[58] Richter, 1973, p. 13; Abbatista, 1993, pp. xxvi–xxvii; Minuti, 1975; Whelan, 2001.
[59] Whelan, 1996.

CHAPTER 3

Antoine-Yves Goguet: the Confusion of Tongues and the origins of civility

(1)

These, after a sentence on the Persians, are the opening words of Gibbon's ninth chapter:

> We shall occasionally mention the Scythian or Sarmatian tribes, which, with their arms and horses, their flocks and herds, their wives and families, wandered over the immense plains which spread themselves from the Caspian Sea to the Vistula, from the confines of Persia to those of Germany. But the warlike Germans, who first resisted, then invaded, and at length overturned, the western monarchy of Rome, will occupy a much more important place in this history, and possess a stronger, and, if we may use the expression, a more domestic, claim to our attention and regard. The most civilised nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany,[1] and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners. In their primitive state of simplicity and independence the Germans were surveyed by the discerning eye, and delineated by the masterly pencil, of Tacitus, the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts.[2]

From the viewpoint of a western European, the prime problem of philosophical history was to explain the present as resulting from the civilising of the fierce giants of the north, and the historian was to be guided by Tacitus in their respect, as in the understanding of the self-corruption of the principate. The origins of post-antique Europe lay less directly in either the river valleys of Mesopotamia and Egypt or the nomadism of the Eurasian steppe than in the forests of what the Romans had called *Germania* before its encounter with the Latin West; we are concerned with Gibbon's occidental roots rather than his oriental interests. But it was known that Germans had spread eastwards to become plains-dwelling Goths, and that it had been nomadic movement, originating further east than the Scythians

[1] A clear echo of Montesquieu: 'ce beau système a été trouvé dans les bois' (*Esprit des Lois*, XI, 6).
[2] Womersley, 1994, I, p. 230. Observe that Tacitus is supplying a *peinture*.

themselves, which had impelled the Goths across the Danube. Though the passage just quoted ends by giving the forest priority over the steppe, it begins by mentioning the steppe before the forest.

Tacitus ranked as the first of philosophic historians because he had written a treatise on the manners and customs of barbarians which had

> deserved to exercise the diligence of innumerable antiquarians, and to excite the genius and penetration of the philosophic historians of our own times.[3]

It had become the business of the latter to construct a scientific study of barbarism as part of a historical study of the growth of modern political economy, and Gibbon's ninth chapter is a contribution to that philosophic history, and to keeping the fierce giants of the north at the centre of its structure. But the scientific study of barbarism had already begun to differentiate between its shades and stages, and it was known that if the forest produced *selvaggi* or savages, the steppe was the domain of shepherds in the developed condition of nomadism. Gibbon was about to begin describing forest-dwellers and plains-dwellers alike as both savages and shepherds, and to the extent that the two terms had become differentiated, he must recombine them in different mixtures. The significance of a sentence structure which switches the priorities between Scythians and Germans is that it points towards a problematic in Gibbon's theory of barbarism.

> The Germans, in the age of Tacitus, were unacquainted with the use of letters; and the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilised people from a herd[4] of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas intrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgement becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt, in an improved society, to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the *illiterate* peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses, but very little, his fellow-labourer the ox in the exercise of his mental faculties. The same, and even a greater, difference will be found between nations than between individuals; and we may safely pronounce that, without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.[5]

[3] Ibid.

[4] It would have been possible for Gibbon to write 'horde'. Did he see this term as becoming appropriate to the study of nomads?

[5] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 234–5. Gibbon's italics.

The immediate context of this passage is that derision, already quoted, of Rudbeck and other unenlightened antiquarians who had thought it possible to trace the pedigrees of wild Germans, Irish or Tartars back to the sons of Noah, and we may also catch an echo of the Ossianic controversy; it is being denied that historic memory can be preserved through oral transmission. Fully to understand its place in Gibbon's philosophy of history, however, we must pair it with another, which occurs two paragraphs later.

> Gold, silver and iron were extremely scarce in Germany. Its barbarous inhabitants wanted both skill and patience to investigate those rich veins of silver, which have so liberally rewarded the attention of the princes of Brunswick and Saxony. Sweden, which now supplies Europe with iron, was equally ignorant of its own riches; and the appearance of the arms of the Germans furnished a sufficient proof how little iron they were able to bestow on what they must have deemed the noblest use of that metal. The various transactions of peace and war had introduced some Roman coins (chiefly silver) among the borderers of the Rhine and Danube; but the more distant tribes were absolutely unacquainted with the use of money, carried on their confined traffic by the exchange of commodities, and prized their rude earthen vessels as of equal value with the silver vases, the presents of Rome to their princes and ambassadors. To a mind capable of reflection, such leading facts convey more instruction than a tedious detail of subordinate circumstances. The value of money has been settled by general consent to express our wants and our property, as letters were invented to express our ideas; and both these institutions, by giving a more active energy to the powers and passions of human nature, have contributed to multiply the objects they were designed to represent. The use of gold and silver is in a great measure fictitious, but it would be impossible to enumerate the important and various services which agriculture, and all the arts, have received from iron, when tempered and fashioned by the operation of fire and the dexterous hand of man. Money, in a word, is the most universal incitement, iron the most powerful instrument, of human industry; and it is very difficult to conceive by what means a people, neither actuated by the one nor seconded by the other, could emerge from the grossest barbarism.[6]

Gibbon was always much more than a neo-classical rhetorician, reiterating in a stately silver-Latin English the humanist vision of Rome's history. Here, as in many other passages, we discover in him a deep and sensitive – if to our eyes sharply limited – concern with the history of material culture; but this concern is itself embedded and expressed in a rhetoric of its own, which will prove to have been one of the rhetorics of Enlightenment. In the passage just quoted, we move from iron to silver and back again to iron, while iron itself moves invisibly from sword to ploughshare; and there are crucial junctions between gold and paper (assuming this to have been the

[6] Ibid. I, pp. 236–7.

medium in which letters were communicated) and between fiction and reality. We may see here Tory England's incessant doubt as to whether the element of fiction in metal specie did not become uncontrollable and intolerable in paper money and government stock; but we are to see also the Whig and Moderate theory of progress, in which societies moved from barbarism to civilisation in proportion as they developed means of exchanging things and symbols, and so of multiplying and extending their ideas. When money was added to letters as the medium of exchange between men, the multiplication of ideas became the multiplication of things; and with the invention of paper credit (it is permissible yet dangerous to add) the idea of money served to multiply money itself. The history of things, and of material culture, became the history of ideas as well of commerce and power, and so became the history of Enlightenment; yet all these histories rested on an infrastructure which necessarily included the history of fiction and even fantasy.

At the roots of European culture, from Plato to Pound, there is an incessant philosophic mistrust of the tokens of exchange – money, letters, trade-goods, women – which threaten to compromise the autonomy of the self-reliant individual, who knows himself as proprietor of his arms and land, and as reflecting on the meanings of his own words. There is a twentieth-century poem which imagines the coins of Byzantium arriving at the court of Arthur. Kay the Steward sees that they are signs in motion.

> Good; these cover the years and the miles
> and talk one style's dialects to London and Omsk.

Taliessin the poet is uneasy.

> I am afraid of the little loosed dragons.
> When the means are autonomous, they are deadly; when words
> escape from verse they hurry to rape souls;
> when sensation slips from intellect, expect the tyrant;
> the brood of carriers levels the good they carry.
> We have taught our images to be free; are we glad?
> are we glad to have brought convenient heresy to Logres?

The Archbishop replies

> that the everlasting house the soul discovers
> is always another's; we must lose our own ends . . .
> This is the way of this world in the day of that other's;
> make yourself friends by means of the riches of iniquity,
> for the wealth of the self is the health of the self exchanged.[7]

[7] The poem is by Charles Williams: Williams and Lewis, 1974, pp. 62–3.

Gibbon, at the high tide of pre-Revolutionary Enlightenment, did not expect the self to lose its own ends as it enriched its autonomy through exchange. He did not fear that words would rape souls; only that goods might feminise both souls and words, in the process that had reduced the ancient giants to pygmies and left them exposed to rape by new giants, a penetration which had proved fertile after a thousand years. His command of irony was his defence against the fictions inherent in exchange, and if the images went free he expected heresy to be convenient enough. Enthusiasm, however – the unchecked exchange of ideas and sensations which slipped from intellect – was to confront him with some heresies that irony might not find convenient at all; yet it is not clear that this was to derail his faith in commerce and the multiplication of ideas.

(11)

The origins of the republic and its empire in the ancient world, like those of commerce and civil society in the modern, were tied to theories of stadial progress in which the successive appearances of hunting, herding and farming societies were given cardinal importance. We have noticed the growth of a belief that the European peninsulas had been settled by waves of shepherd peoples since post-diluvian antiquity, with no preceding stage of hunter-gatherer 'savagery'; Smith held that the ancient polis had appeared when shepherds became acquainted with grain-growing and with seaborne Mediterranean commerce. This was linked with his insistence that the shepherd stage, in stadial history, marked the crucial transition from savagery to heroic (and political) culture. He was near, if he had not quite reached, the point where this moment in conjectural history became identified with the nomadic herdsmen of Central Asia, the source (or *vagina gentium*) of the successive waves of westward invasion. We are about to study the beginnings of Gibbon's interest, first in the distinction between pastoral and agricultural society, second in the role of the steppe in European history; and we will come upon the circumstance that, in spite of his friendship with Smith and his respect for Scottish social philosophy, Gibbon employed a stadial theory – not based on the rejection of the biblical chronology – in which the shepherd stage was not accorded Smith's crucial position and the herdsman was placed closer to the hunter or savage than to the cultivator. This must bear upon his concept of barbarism, and of the 'modern' history in which transhumant Goths and Germans were impelled by nomadic Huns to enter the well-watered lands of Alpine and Mediterranean Europe and transform history by becoming agriculturalists.

In establishing a context of writings which illuminate the treatment of barbarians in these chapters of the *Decline and Fall*, we now take account of works which Gibbon knew well and employed regularly, though he did not cite them in the footnotes to that chapter. The first of these is a treatise *De l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences*, by Antoine-Yves Goguet, a *conseiller* and according to Gibbon a *président* of the Parlement of Paris, who had died aged forty-two in 1758, the year in which his three volumes were published.[8] Gibbon possessed a copy, and cites it at various points in his later chapters, remarking once: 'I doubt whether this book, especially in England, is as well known as it ought to be.'[9] This suggests that he may not have known of the English translation published in Edinburgh in 1761 and 1775,[10] supposedly the work of Robert Henry, a less celebrated but not inconsiderable figure among the Scottish historians, whose *History of Great Britain* (1771) was in Gibbon's library.[11] Goguet had nothing to say to Gibbon on the subject of German antiquities, but is a major source for his understanding of the history of material culture; and he has much to say to us on how the concepts of barbarism and savagery assumed the shapes they had in eighteenth-century minds.

It is now rightly pointed out that Scottish political economy is not exclusively a product of the need to show how classical republican virtue had been superseded by polite and commercial sociability, the division of labour and the professionalisation of arms. It was no less a product of the natural jurisprudence of Samuel Pufendorf, which had grown increasingly important to Scottish teachers of moral philosophy as the rigours of Calvinism abated. Among Pufendorf's concerns had been the need to stress the natural sociability of man, and to break down Hobbes's sharp distinctions between the feral 'state of nature' and the state of 'civil government' in subjection to a sovereign, which had immediately but artificially superseded it. He had therefore endowed the earliest man with a capacity for tacit consent to acts of appropriation, by which individuals had possessed themselves first of the fruits of the earth, then of the flesh and skins of wild animals, then of the lives of beasts capable of domestication, and finally of pasture and arable land. In this way negative community had given place to positive sociability, and the right to gather to the right to the yield of one's

[8] Goguet, 1758.
[9] DF, IV, ch. 40, n. 59 (published in 1788); Womersley, 1994, II, p. 579.
[10] Goguet, 1761, repr. 1976.
[11] *Library*, p. 148; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1225.

labour; the growth of a law of property had been concomitant with the growth of agriculture. Pufendorf's conjectural history of appropriation and jurisprudence had easily absorbed the sequence of hunting, herding and farming which had been constructed by the conjecturalists of antiquity, and when read in conjunction with Locke's proposal that natural had been replaced by civil society at the advent of a medium of exchange, it could carry all four of the stages of society growing familiar to theorists. Jean Barbeyrac had done much to popularise both Pufendorf and Locke in Dutch and Scottish universities, and the interactions of moral philosophy, jurisprudence and political economy have been traced to the time of Adam Smith and beyond.[12]

All this may have been well enough known to Gibbon, and also to Goguet; but the former possessed only Pufendorf's works on public law and modern history,[13] and the latter cites no one jurist predominantly among his authorities. As a historian of the arts and sciences, Goguet was a historian of the multiplication of ideas, which he saw as rooted in material culture; he placed the laws before the arts and sciences for the possibly Lockean reason that until there was secure possession and just distribution of things, ideas could not develop; and he insisted that none of these processes could take place before the establishment of agriculture. Where the German jurist remained a historian of rights, the French *parlementaire* set out to become a historian of manners and ideas, whose importance to Gibbon we have begun to consider. What was common to all three was the equation of appropriation and labour with agriculture, and the conviction that it was this which marked the transition from savagery to civilisation.

Before proceeding, we have to remark that Goguet's historical scheme is contained entirely within the biblical chronology. Its starting point is the Fall of the Tower of Babel, the Confusion of Tongues, and the dispersion of the peoples from the plain of Shinar or Sennaar. Its terminus is the return of the Jews from Babylonish captivity, and it is divided into three periods – from the Deluge to the death of Jacob, from Jacob to the election of Saul, and from Saul to the Return from Captivity – which are said to correspond to the Greek periodisation of history into unknown, fabulous, and Olympiad.[14] It is important that we should not discard Goguet on this account. Gibbon of course derided the possibility of tracing genealogies

[12] Hont, 1987. [13] *Library*, pp. 231–2.

[14] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. ix–xvi. Note his reasons for omitting treatment of the Chinese (xv, verso) and the Greeks (xv–xvi).

back to the sons of Noah, and it is probable enough that he rejected the biblical narrative; he was a reader of Buffon, and in a footnote to the ninth chapter indicated his belief that *homo sapiens* was a species belonging to the animal kingdom.[15] But though the intellectual history of the nineteenth century has educated us to think of the Book of Genesis as an obstruction to the growth of scientific anthropology, we must be cautious in applying this presumption to the age in which Gibbon lived. It was an age before archaeology, when neither the science of geology, the origin of species, nor the discovery of fossil man had yet raised problems insoluble through reliance on the written records of early civilisation. Archbishop Ussher's dating of the creation allowed the student of remote antiquity five to six millennia into which to fit his schemes, a period long enough to include most of what there was to be known about the history of agriculture, urbanisation and literacy. The problem facing pre-archaeological scholarship was chronology, the reconciliation of genealogies and mythographies inherited from ancient societies, to which the Mesoamerican and Chinese schemes had recently been added. The authority of Scripture ensured that all these systems had to be adjusted to fit the Hebrew of the Septuagint chronology; but there was room for Noah and Nimrod to appear as initiating complex and sophisticated schemes of social and cultural development. Voltaire's assault on the primacy of Israel had more to do with discrediting the clergy than with liberating the philosophers; and Gibbon relied on authors – Goguet, de Guignes and Carte – whose adherence to the biblical narrative was outspoken and defensive, but impeded neither them nor him in developing Enlightened schemes of human progress. Goguet spoke for them all when he wrote:

> L'Histoire des Loix, des Arts et des Sciences est, à proprement parler, l'Histoire de l'Esprit humain. Ce sujet dont assurément rien n'égale la grandeur et l'importance a déja été traité bien des fois; je ne crois pas cependant qu'on se soit encore attaché, autant qu'on l'auroit dû, à développer bien fidèlement l'origine et les premiers progrès des connoissances humaines.[16]
>
> [The history of laws, arts, and sciences, is, properly speaking, the history of the human mind. This great and most important subject has often indeed been treated of already; but, in my opinion, sufficient pains have not as yet been taken to discover the real origin, and unfold the gradual improvements of all the various branches of our knowledge.][17]

[15] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 233, n. 11.
[16] Goguet, 1758, 1, Préface, a iij.
[17] Goguet, 1761, p. v.

Goguet proceeds to expound a post-diluvian history of human culture. The descendants of Noah assembled in the plain of Sennaar,[18] and after about a hundred and fifty years had increased in number to a point where the recolonisation of the earth could begin. Terrified of dispersing, however, they sought to build a single immense city, with a tower so high that it could be seen from a great distance. Providence smote them with the Confusion of Tongues, in order to disrupt this human swarm and oblige them to repeople the planet.[19] There is no hint of a titanic attempt to storm heaven, such as had so often given the fall of Babel the character of a third or fourth fall of man;[20] but the consequences for mankind were terrible none the less. Some language groups remained stationary in the vicinity of Ararat and Sennaar, and retained some knowledge of the world before the Flood;[21] but others wandered away, with the double consequence that they soon reached the remotest areas of the habitable world, but in the process regressed to a savage existence in which all human cognisances were lost. Goguet establishes a basic correlation between mobility and savagery.

Je n'entreprendrai point de marquer la route que tinrent les différentes colonies qui se formerent alors. Cette recherche seroit totalement étranger à l'object que je me suis proposé. Je dirai seulement que pour peu qu'on refléchisse sur la facilité et la promptitude avec laquelle aujourd'hui, les Sauvages, les Tartares et les Arabes se transportent avec toutes leurs familles à de très-grandes distances, on sentira aisément que des personnes robustes accoutumées à une vie pénible, et n'ayant presque aucun besoin, forcées de quitter leur terre natale, et d'aller chercher de nouvelles habitations, dûrent se répandre fort promptement dans les différens climats de notre hémisphere.[22]

[I shall not undertake to describes the routes of the several colonies which were then formed. Such a disquisition would be altogether foreign to my present purpose. I shall only observe, that if we reflect ever so little, with how much ease and expedition the Savages, Tartars, and Arabians of our days, transport themselves and their whole families to very great distances, we shall soon be convinced, that those first men, naturally robust, accustomed to a life of labour, and having few wants, when forced to quit their native soil in search of new settlements, might in a very little time spread themselves over the different climates of our hemisphere.][23]

Writing before 1758, with the exploration of the Pacific scarcely begun, Goguet did not say whether there was a southern continent, or how it

[18] The Shinar of the English Bible. [19] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 1–3.

[20] Earlier falls had each a social consequence. The sin of Adam had brought the doom of labour; the curse of Cain had produced metallurgy, music and the building of cities; the causes of the wickedness that provoked the Flood are less clear but may be connected with social corruption.

[21] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 5. [22] Ibid. 1, p. 3. [23] Goguet, 1761, p. 3.

had been peopled. But barbarism increased as the square of the distance traversed;

ces transmigrations dûrent altérer considérablement ce qu'on avoit pû conserver des connoissances primitives. Les sociétés se trouvant rompues par la diversité du langage, et les familles demeurant isolées, la plûpart tomberent bien-tôt dans une profonde ignorance . . . il a été un tems où presque toute la terre fut plongée dans une barbarie extrême. . . .

On ne sera point difficulté d'ajouter foi à ces récits, quand on jettera les yeux sur l'état dans lequel les anciens historiens disent que plusieurs contrées étoient encore de leur tems; état dont la réalité se trouve confirmée par les rélations modernes. Les Voyageurs nous apprennent qu'aujourd'hui même, on rencontre dans quelques parties du monde, des hommes d'une caractère si cruelle et si féroce, qu'ils n'ont entre eux ni société ni commerce; se faisant une guerre perpétuelle, ne cherchant qu'à se détruire et même à se manger. Denués de tous les principes de l'humanité, ces peuples sont sans loix, sans police, sans aucune forme de gouvernement; peu différens des bêtes brutes, ils n'ont pour retraite que les antres et les cavernes. Leur nourriture consiste dans quelques fruites, quelques racines que les bois leur fournissent; faute de connoissances et d'industrie, ils ne peuvent se procurer que rarement des alimens plus solides. Privés enfin des notions les plus simples et les plus ordinaires, ces peuples n'ont de l'homme que la figure.[24]

[But this dispersion of mankind must necessarily have considerably diminished the primitive knowledge which they had hitherto been able to preserve. All society being dissolved by this confusion of tongues, and families living detached from each other, they sunk in a little time into the profoundest ignorance.][25]

[We shall find no difficulty in believing these relations, if we cast our eyes on what ancient authors tell us of the state of several countries even in their own times, a state the reality of which is confirmed by modern relations. Travellers inform us, that even at this day, in some parts of the world, they meet with men who are strangers to all social intercourse, of a character so cruel and ferocious, that they live in perpetual war, destroying, and even devouring each other. These wretched people, void of all the principles of humanity, without laws, polity, or government, live in dens and caverns, and differ but very little from the brute creation. Their food consists of some fruits and roots with which the woods supply them; for want of skill and industry they can seldom procure more solid nourishment. In a word, not having even the most common and obvious notions, they have nothing of humanity but the external figure.][26]

These are the impoverished food-gathering Kalaharians and Patagonians, the most southerly human groups yet glimpsed. The Tasmanians would be added to them shortly, and the Fuegians would perturb the sight of the young Charles Darwin in the next century. It can also be understood how

[24] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 4. [25] Ibid. [26] Ibid., p. 4.

distressed James Cook and his company would soon be by the Maori of the Marlborough Sounds, a sociable and approachable people who nevertheless practised cannibalism, considered the ultimate evidence of dehumanisation.[27] If they had been miserable cavemen, it would have been easier to bear the sight. Goguet's assumption is that as peoples wandered further, forgetting how to cultivate, fabricate, produce or exchange, they lost the capacity to form ideas which only the sight of artefacts in movement could nurture or engender; dispersion was the long descent of man to orang-utan (the wild man of the woods, subhuman in that he had not the use of language). Savages were not primitive but degenerate; not pre-human but post-diluvian. There is much in common between Goguet's account of the dispersion of the peoples from Sennaar and Gibbon's meditation, at the end of the 'General Reflections of the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West', on whether all the human arts would disappear and cannibalism return, following some general catastrophe.[28] Sociability was natural to man; it could nevertheless be lost.

Goguet further assumed that the end-product of dispersion could be seen in the savagery of the uttermost parts of the earth, and that it was possible to reason back from this to the savagery of the old world in the heroic period. In a move which he was certainly not the first to make, but whose consequences were invariably momentous, he equates the wandering food-gatherers perceived in the southern extremities of the world with the wandering Cyclopes described in the Odyssey and employed by Aristotle to typify the lowest form of human association.[29] Defective in their perceptions and ideas, devoid of laws and affections, these vagrant cannibals, satisfying their appetites (including the sexual) as they went, displayed what men became as they forgot their own capacities; and the equation riveted on the hunting and food-gathering peoples of the era in which Europeans overran the planet, the assumption that they were anomic and asocial, descending from man towards ape, because they had lost the capacity to cultivate, manufacture and exchange. Such was the ideology of cultural subjugation in the age of biblical chronology; in the age of scientific anthropology that followed, the racialism of the later Enlightenment reversed the image, claiming that in the ascent from ape towards man,[30] the same peoples had not yet acquired the same capacities.

[27] Beaglehole, 1974, pp. 213, 358–9, 446, 521–2.
[28] Womersley, 1994, II, p. 516.
[29] Goguet, 1758, I, p. 5. See further below, pp. 159–60.
[30] For the orang-utan as pre-human rather than degenerate, see Wokler, 1980.

Meanwhile, there was a startling consequence for the classical scholar to draw from post-biblical sources.

Il parôit demonstré que c'est l'Orient qui a peuplé l'Occident. Javan, fils de Japhet et petit-fils de Noé, est certainement la tige de tous les peuples connus sous le nom de Grecs. L'Ecriture nous apprend que la posterité de ce patriarche alla s'établier dans les Isles voisines de la côte Occidentale de l'Asia mineure; d'où il est à presumer qu'elle ne tarda pas à passer dans la continent de l'Europe.[31]

[It is evident to a demonstration, that the west was peopled from the east. Javan the son of Japhet, and grandson of Noah, is undoubtedly the stem of all those people which were called Greeks. The scriptures inform us, that the posterity of this patriarch settled near the western shores of the Lesser Asia. It is probable, they would not be long in passing from thence to the continent of Europe.][32]

Tout ce qu'on sçait, c'est qu'originairement les habitans de la Grece vivoient sans liaison et sans commerce les uns avec les autres. Il n'y avoit ni loix, ni puissances supérieures qui pussent en imposer. La violence décidoit de tout. On auroit peine à se persuader quelle étoit la grossiéreté et la rusticité des premiers Grecs, si l'on n'en avoit pour garants leurs propres écrivains. Qui croiroit que ce peuple auquel nous sommes redevables de toutes nos connoissances descendit de Sauvages, qui errants dans les bois et dans les campagnes, sans discipline, n'avoient d'autres retraites que les antres et les cavernes; ne faisant point usage du feu, ni des alimens convenables à l'homme; féroces jusqu'à se manger les uns les autres quand l'occasion s'en présentoit? Un trajet aussi long et aussi pénible que le devoit être originairement celui d'Asie en Europe, joint à la difficulté et au tumulte des premiers établissemens, avoit sans doute fait perdre à la plûpart des descendus de Javan le souvenir des connoissances qui pouvoient s'etre conservées après le déluge.

[n. Une comparaison bien simple peut faire très-aisement concevoir comment les premieres colonies, qui d'Asie vinrent s'établir en Europe, durent oublier la plûpart des arts dont elles pouvoient avoir connoissance. Supposons qu'une certaine de personnes tant hommes que femmes, sorties d'un pays policé, soient jettées par la tempête dans une Isle deserte, et qu'elles prennent la résolution de s'y établir; les besoins multipliés dont elle se verront d'abord accablées, et la necessité d'y pourvoir promptement, les forceront d'avoir recours aux expédiens les plus grossiers. Ces nouveaux venus oublieront donc insensiblement, faute d'exercice, les pratiques usitées dans leur ancien pays. D'ailleurs l'esprit de discorde et d'indépendance se glissera bientôt parmi eux. La plûpart se sépareront et acheveront ainsi de tomber dans la plus grande misere et la plus profonde ignorance. Voy. l'Hist. gén. des Voyages, t.xi, p. 206, 207.][33]

[All that we know is, that the inhabitants of Greece lived originally without intercourse or connection with each other. There were no laws, no superior power to unite them; every thing was determined by mere strength and violence. It would be difficult to believe the extreme barbarity of the first Grecians, if we had not the

[31] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 57–8. [32] Goguet, 1761, 1, p. 62. [33] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 59 and n.

testimony of their own writers. Who could imagine, that that ingenious people, to whom Europe is indebted for all its knowledge, were descended from savages, who wandered in the woods and fields, without laws or leaders, having no other retreat but dens and caverns, without the use of fire, or of food proper for men; nay, so ferocious as sometimes to eat each other. A journey so long and difficult as that betwixt Asia and Europe must originally have been, together with the tumult and confusion attending new settlements, made the greatest part of the descendents of Javan lose all the remains of knowledge which had been preserved after the deluge.]

[n. A very simple comparison may make us conceive how the first colonies which came from Asia to Europe might lose the greatest part of their knowledge. Let us suppose a hundred persons, men and women, who had left a civilized country, cast upon a desert island, and resolved to settle in it. They would presently find themselves in want of every thing, and obliged to supply these wants by very coarse expedients, and for want of practice would soon forget the arts used in their native country. A spirit of discord and independence would creep in amongst them; they would soon disband, and fall at once into the greatest misery and the grossest ignorance. See gen. hist. des voy. t.II. p. 206, 207.][34]

We are some distance from the Scottish belief that Europe had been settled by waves of Celto-Scythian shepherds, and though stadial theory is evident here, the civilising of the savages is not yet at hand. The primeval Greeks had been lower than even the heroic warriors whom Jesuit missionaries had seen paralleled in the Hurons and Iroquois.[35] They had been wandering Cyclopes, as solitary and savage as Polyphemus and as defective in ideas as was symbolised by his single eye. They had reached this state through diffusion and dispersal; the errant life to which they had been forced by the loss of language had led to a progressive and self-enforcing loss of arts and ideas, pointing towards (even if it did not reach) the speechless condition of the orang-utan (Goguet does not mention this hominid, but describes the presuppositions under which he became thinkable). The mere food-gatherer, living on roots and grubs in some antarctic desert, had been imagined and supposedly observed, and the desert-island hypothesis was useful in describing how civilised humans might be reduced to cannibalism. But it was not necessary to reach these stages of reduction in order to depict the state of life probably most widespread among post-diluvian men; the hunting and even the pastoral skills could be integrated with the condition of the savage.

On sçait qu'il a été un tems où les peuples ne tiroient leur subsistance que des fruits que la terre produit naturellement; de la chasse, de la pêche et des troupeaux qu'ils élevoient. Ce genre de vie les forçoit à changer souvent de lieu. Ils

[34] Goguet, 1761, I, pp. 63–4. [35] Lafitau, 1724.

n'avoient par conséquence ni demeures habitations fixes. Telle a été, jusqu'au tems oú l'agriculture s'est établie, l'ancienne maniere de vivre, qui s'est même conservée parmi plusieurs nations, comme les Scythes, les Tartares, les Arabes, les Sauvages, etc.[36]

[There was a time, when mankind derived their whole subsistence from the fruits which the earth produced spontaneously, from their hunting, fishing, and their flocks. This kind of life obliged them often to change their abode, consequently they had no dwelling-place nor settled habitations. Such was the ancient manner of living, till agriculture was introduced; in this manner several nations still live, as the Scythians, Tartars, Arabians, Savages, &c.][37]

Who precisely 'les Sauvages' may be in this sentence is not clear,[38] nor does Goguet go into any detail about how hunters learn to be herdsmen. In a later chapter, however, we read:

La subsistance est la premiere et le plus important object dont on se sera occupé dans les sociétés naissantes; mais ces recherches auront été plus ou moins perfectionées, relativement au climat et au génie des différens peuples. Dans quelques païs, on aura commencé par perfectionner l'art de la chasse et de la pêche. La chasse sur-tout a été chez la plûpart des peuples de l'antiquité la principale occupation des premiers hommes. Ils s'y adonnoient autant par le besoin de subsistance, que par la necessité de défendre leur vie contres les attaques de bêtes féroces. Il y a encore aujourd'hui quantité de nations de l'un et de l'autre continent qui ne s'occupent que de la chasse et de la pêche.

Mais les peuples industrieux ne tarderent pas à remarquer que dans cette quantité innombrable d'animaux répandus sur la surface de la terre, il y avoit des especes, qui d'elle-mêmes se réunissoient et vivoient en société. On s'apperçut même que ces especes étoient naturellement moins farouches que les autres. On cherche les moyens de les apprivoiser, des les refermer en parcs, et de les faire multiplier afin d'en avoir toujours une certaine quantité à sa disposition. La plûpart des peuples ne tiroient dans les premiers siécles, et long-tems après, leur subsistance que des troupeaux. Nous connoissons plusieurs nations puissantes et très-étendues qui pratiquent encore le même genre de vie. [n. Les Tartares, les Arabes, etc.] Leurs troupeaux fournissent à tous leurs besoins. On s'attacha enfin à examiner les différentes productions de la nature et à trouver les moyens d'en profiter.

La terre offre quantité de plantes et de fruits qui même sans être cultivés, fournissent à l'homme une nourriture solide et agréable. On commença par discerner les meilleures especes, et sur-tout celles qui se conservent long-tems après avoir été cueilles: on songea à en faire des provisions. On apprit ensuite l'art de les faire profiter, et même d'en augmenter le nombre et les qualités par la culture. C'est à cette découverte que nous sommes redevables de cette prodigieuse quantité d'arts et des sciences dont nous jouissons aujourd'hui. Tant que les peuples n'ont connu

[36] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 15. [37] Goguet, 1761, pp. 16–17.

[38] References occur (e.g., p. 8, n.d.) to a work 'Meurs des sauvages'. Lafitau's Americans (Lafitau, 1724) may well be intended.

d'autres moyens de subsister que la chasse, la pêche et le soin de leurs troupeaux, ils n'ont pas fait de grands progrès dans les arts. Ce genre de vie les obligeoit à changer continuellement de lieu, et d'ailleurs ne les forçoit pas à faire usage de toutes les ressources dont l'industrie humaine et capable. Les nations qui ne pratiquent point l'agriculture n'ont qu'une connoissance trés-médiocre des arts et des sciences. Mais la culture de la terre a contraint les peuples qui s'y sont adonnés, à se fixer dans un même canton, et à inventer quantité d'arts dont ils avoient besoin pour y réussir.[39]

[At the commencement of societies, their first care would be to provide the necessaries of life. But the means of doing this would be more or less perfect according to the climate and genius of the different people. In some countries they would begin by improvements in the arts of hunting and fishing. Hunting especially, was the principal employment of a great part of mankind in the first ages of the world. They were obliged to this in order to defend their own lives against the assaults of wild beasts, as well as to procure subsistence. There are still a great many nations in both continents, whose whole employment is hunting and fishing.

But the more industrious and discerning part of mankind would soon observe, that amongst that innumerable multitude of animals which were spread over the face of the earth, there were some which lived in droves and herds, and were much more tame and tractable than the rest. They would endeavour to make themselves masters of these, to confine them in inclosures, to make them multiply that they might always have a sufficient number of them at their command. A great part of the world in these first ages, and for a long time after, derived their chief subsistence from their flocks. We know several numerous and powerful nations who at this day follow this way of life, and are furnished with every thing they stand in need of from their flocks and herds.

Men would next apply themselves to examine the productions of the earth. This, without any cultivation, presented them with a great many plants and fruits which afforded a very agreeable and substantial nourishment. They would begin their observations upon these, by distinguishing the best kinds, especially such as kept longest after they were gathered. They would next endeavour to find out the best ways of using them, to discover the arts of increasing their quantity and improving their qualities by cultivation. It is to the discovery of agriculture we are indebted for that prodigious number of arts and sciences we now enjoy. As long as mankind had no other way of subsisting but by hunting, fishing, and feeding their flocks, arts made but very little progress. This kind of life obliged them to remove often from place to place, and did not require the knowledge of many arts. Those nations who do not practise agriculture, have still but a very slender acquaintance with the arts and sciences. The cultivation of the earth obliged those who applied themselves to it, to fix in a certain place, and to find out the various arts they stood in need of.][40]

[39] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 79–80. [40] Goguet, 1761, pp. 84–5.

For Goguet, as for Adam Smith, 'the age of shepherds' sees the advent of appropriation (*apprivoiser*), enclosure (*les renfermer dans les parcs*) and power (*nations puissantes*); but he does not anticipate Smith in making pastoralism the decisive break with the state of savagery. He was not a political economist, with the division of labour at the centre of his field of vision, though he understood its importance well enough; but a historian of civil society, who believed law necessarily preceded the invention of the arts and sciences, and had reason to make the transition from mobile to sedentary society the turning point in his scheme of human history. In his preface he had observed:

> Je parle d'abord de l'origine des Loix, et de celle du Gouvernement Politique, parce que les Arts, les Sciences, et toutes les découvertes, en un mot, n'ont pris naissance et ne se sont perfectionnées que dans les sociétés fixes et policées. Or, de pareilles sociétés n'ont jamais pû se former que par le moyen des Loix, et par l'établissement d'un Gouvernement fondé sur de certains principes.
>
> Les Arts, proprement dits, viennent ensuite. Leur découverte et leur perfection, sur-tout, sont l'ouvrage et le fruit des sociétés policées, mais particulierement de celles qui s'etant fixées les premieres, ont habité constamment dans un même canton, effet que l'agriculture a pû seule produire. Aussi ai-je traité de la decouverte de l'Agriculture avant celle de tous les autres Arts dont elle a occasioné en grand partie l'invention, la multiplicité et les progrès.[41]
>
> [I speak first of the origin of laws, policy, and government, because arts, sciences, and, in a word, all discoveries have had their origin and their improvements in settled and civilized societies. But such societies could never have been formed without the help of laws, and a government founded on certain principles.
>
> The arts, properly so called, come next. Their discovery, and more especially their improvement, are the work of well-regulated societies, particularly of such as have settled early, and have always inhabited the same spot; which nothing but agriculture could enable them to do. For this reason, I have treated of the origin of agriculture before that of all other arts, as it has been the occasion in a great measure of their invention, multiplicity, and progress.][42]

It was a scriptural necessity that some memory of the age before the Flood should have been preserved, and therefore it was desirable to maintain the hypothesis that some settled and lettered societies should have survived the Confusion of Tongues in lands close to its occurrence; but that apart, it was possible for Goguet to reduce the whole human race to a state of savagery and institute an evolutionary model of its recovery. The function of agriculture in this model was to render human society stationary and capable of government. Immediately after the passage cited earlier

[41] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. xvi–xvii. [42] Goguet, 1761, p. xii.

(see n. 37), in which 'les Scythes, les Tartars, les Arabes, les Sauvages, etc.' occur in conjunction, Goguet proceeds:

> La découverte de l'agriculture a introduit des moeurs toutes differentes. Les peuples chez lesquels cet art s'est établi ont été obligés à se fixer dans un même canton. Ils se sont réunis dans les villes. Cette espece de société ayant besoin d'un bien plus grand nombre d'arts, que les peuples qui ont négligé ou ignoré l'agriculture, elle a dû par une suite nécessaire avoir aussi besoin de beaucoup plus de loix. Cette observation nous conduit à distinguer deux ordres différens dans les Loix POSITIVES: les unes qui conviennent également à toute espece de société politique, et les autres qui ne sont propres qu'aux Peuples CULTIVATEURS.
>
> Les loix qui conviennent également à toute espece de société publique, sont elles qui en ont été le fondement et le bien, sans lesquelles en un mot aucune forme de gouvernement n'auroit pû subsister. De ce genre sont les loix touchant la distinction du TIEN et du MIEN, c'est-à-dire, le droit de la propriété, les loix pénales, celles qui fixent les formalités du mariage; les loix enfin qui concernent les obligations respectives que les hommes contractent les uns envers les autres comme membres d'une même société. Je mettrai encore dans ce rang l'établissement du culte public et solemnel rendu à la Divinité chez toutes les nations policées, quoique sous différentes formes: tel est le premier ordre qu'on peut distinguer dans les Loix POSITIVES.[43]

> [The discovery of agriculture introduced a different set of manners. Those nations who applied to that art, were obliged to fix in a certain district. They built and inhabited cities. This kind of society having need of many more arts than were necessary for those who neglected or were ignorant of agriculture, must of consequence need also many more laws. This observation leads us to distinguish two different orders in positive laws, such as are proper to all kinds of political society in general, and such as are peculiar to a society which follows agriculture.
>
> Laws which are equally proper for all kinds of political society, are such as are the foundation and bond of it, without which no form of government can subsist. Of this kind are the laws touching the distinction betwixt *meum* & *tuum*, that is to say, right of property; PENAL LAWS; those which settle the formalities of marriage; in a word, all laws relating to those respective obligations which mankind contract as members of one society. I am inclined to place in this rank the establishment of solemn and public worship. This, under one form or other, has had a place in all civilized nations. Such is the first class of positive laws.][44]

Goguet is not about to deny all knowledge of natural law to human beings even in the lower states of savagery, and he keeps the door open to the possibility that some of these positive laws will obtain in hunter or shepherd societies; the state of barbarism is a state of nature. But he continues:

[43] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 16. [44] Goguet, 1761, p. 17.

Celles que je place dans les second ordre supposent une société où il y a déja quelques Arts d'inventés, et par conséquent un commerce et un mouvement d'effets. Ces Loix ne sont qu'une extension et un développement des premieres. Le droit NATUREL ou, pour parler plus exactement, l'equité réfléchie fait la base des unes et des les autres; mais c'est du droit CIVIL que les dernieres ont reçu leur forme dans chaque pays. Cette forme a dû nécessairement varier, relativement au climat, au génie des différentes nations, et aux circonstances particulieres: c'est en quoi consiste la caractere distinctif des deux ordres de loix POSITIVES que je viens d'établir. Les diverses manieres dont a été modifié dans chaque pays le second ordre des loix POSITIVES, constituent ce qu'on appelle le droit CIVIL d'une nation.[45]

[In the second class I place such laws as suppose the invention of several arts, and by consequence commerce, and the frequent change of property. These laws are no more than an extension or unfolding of the former. Natural law, or, to speak with more precision, rational equity, is the foundation of both; but it is by the civil law of each country that these last are digested and reduced to form. This form must necessarily vary, according to the climate, genius, and particular circumstances of different nations. It is in this [that] the distinguishing characteristic of these two ranks of positive laws consist[s]. The different manner in which this last class of positive laws has been modified in each country, constitutes the civil law of that country.][46]

As Goguet pursues the process which has led to the establishment of *les sociétés fixes et policées*, we discover that the two terms are interdependent. The principal characteristic of agriculture is that it has made men sedentary, and therefore capable of exchange; instead of a wandering population of hunters and herdsmen, gathering and marshalling their few goods as they go, there is now a stationary population of farmers and craftsmen, generating goods and transmitting them from one settlement to another. Agriculture is the immediate parent of commerce, urbanisation and government. We catch only a brief glimpse of something like a Lockean state of nature, in which land is being appropriated and the only laws are laws of demarcation and *suum cuique*.

La premiere loi qu'on aura établie, aura été pour assigner et assurer à chaque habitant une certaine quantité de terrein. Dans les tems où le labourage n'en étoit point encore connu, les terres étoient en commun. Il n'y avoit ni bornes ni limites qui en réglassent la partage, chacun prenoient sa subsistance où il jugeoit à propos. On abandonnoit, on reprenoit successivement les mêmes cantons, suivant qu'ils étoient plus ou moins épuisés: cette maniere de vivre n'a plus été practicable quand l'agriculture a été introduite. Il fallut alors distinguer les possessions et prendre les mesures nécessaires pour faire jouir chaque citoyen du fruit de ses travaux. Il étoit dans l'ordre que celui qui avoit semé du grain fût sûr de le recueillir, et ne vît pas

[45] Ibid. [46] Goguet, 1761, p. 17. The translator or his printer is in difficulties here.

les autres profiter des peines et des soins qu'il s'étoit donnés. De-là sont émanées les loix sur la propriété des terres, sur la maniere de les partager et d'en jouir. Ces objets ont toujours extrêmement occupé les legislateurs.[47]

[The first law such a people would establish, would be one for assigning and securing to each family a certain portion of ground. When husbandry was unknown, all lands were common. There were no boundaries nor land-marks; every one sought his subsistence where he thought fit. By turns they abandoned, and repossessed the same districts, as they were more or less exhausted. But after agriculture was introduced, this was not practicable. It was necessary then to distinguish possessions, and to take necessary measures, that every member of society might enjoy the fruits of his labours. It was highly reasonable that he who had sowed should reap, and not see another seize the profits of his toil and care. Hence, the laws concerning the property of lands, the manner of dividing and possessing them. These objects have always very much employed the thoughts of legislators.][48]

Labourage – which must mean the use of implements of cultivation[49] – marks the point at which one begins to mingle one's labour with the environment, and property becomes possible and needs laws to regulate it. But we do not sense Locke's sharp caesura between a primitive state of appropriation through labour, in which neighbourly justice serves to enforce natural law, and the growth of an exchange medium necessitating the institutions of government. For Goguet it is a single uninterrupted process.

L'agriculture, comme je l'ai déja dit, a donné successivement naissance à la plus grande partie des arts; les arts ont produit le commerce, et le commerce a nécessairement occasionné quantité de réglemens: il a même fallu par la suite étendre ou réformer ces réglemens, à mesure que le commerce s'est étendu: que l'industrie s'est perfectionée; qu'il s'est introduit de nouveaux signes de denrées; qu'on a fait de nouvelles recherches, et que l'abondance a produit le luxe et la somptuosité.

On n'a connu et on n'a sçu travailler les métaux qu'après un certain tems; l'usage qu'on a fait de cette découverte a produit de nouveaux arts, et avancé extraordinairement les progrés de ceux que l'on connoissoit auparavant: autres sources de nouvelles loix. L'introduction de ces même métaux dans le commerce, comme prix commun de toutes les marchandises, a dû amener nécessairement de nouveaux réglemens, de nouvelles ordonnances. Les acquisitions et les obligations sont les suites naturelles du commerce et de l'industrie, du maniement et du mouvement de l'argent.[50]

[47] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 29. [48] Goguet, 1761, p. 31.

[49] See the plate opposite p. 85, with drawings of Egyptian, Greek and French heavy ploughs. Reproduced in Goguet, 1761, opposite p. 89.

[50] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 31.

[Agriculture, as I have said already, gave birth to the greatest part of arts, arts produced commerce, and commerce necessarily occasioned a great number of regulations: it even became necessary, in succeeding times, to extend or reform these regulations in proportion as commerce grew more extensive; as industry advanced to perfection, as commodities were represented by new signs, as new discoveries were made, and as abundance introduced luxury and magnificence.

It was long before men found out metals, and the manner of working them; but when this discovery was made, it produced many new arts, and greatly advanced those which had been known before. These were often sources of new laws. The introduction of these same metals into commerce as a common price of all commodities, necessarily occasioned new regulations, and new ordinances. Acquisitions and obligations are the natural consequences of commerce and of industry, and of the administration and of the circulation of money.][51]

The difference between Locke and Goguet is perhaps that the latter, servant of a great absolute monarchy, is less concerned with the origin of the rights by which some men rule others than with that of the civilised manners which government regulates in *les états policés*; *police* and politeness are very close together in his mind, more so than they were for Englishmen. Consequently we soon learn from him that the function of sedentary agriculture is to oblige men to communicate with each other, as their properties are marked off and as their goods are transmitted through space and time, by *maniement* and *mouvement*. There arises the growth of signs and of ideas.

Les affaires importantes de la société, comme les obligations réciproques, les ventes, l'état des personnes, la propriété et la quantité des biens, les mariages, les jugemens, etc. ont eu besoin dans tous les tems d'un degré de publicité qui en assurât l'exécution et l'authenticité. C'est à cet effet qu'on a inventé certaines formules pour dresser ces sortes d'actes, qu'on a autorisé certaines personnes à les recevoir, et qu'on a établi des depôts publics où on pût les consigner pour y recourir et les consulter dans le besoin. Toute la société civile porte sur la sureté des engagemens mutuels que contractent les differens membres qui la composent.

Les peuples ont été assez de tems sans connoître l'art de peindre la parole et de la rendre durable et permanente. Tous les actes se passoient alors verbalement. Il falloit cependant les constater. La forme usitée étoit de les passer en public et devant les témoins.

[It has been found necessary in all ages, that the more important affairs of society, such as, bonds of mutual obligation, sales, marriages, sentences of judges, the quality and property of the citizens, &c. should have a certain degree of notoriety, in order to secure their execution and authenticity. To this end, certain forms have been settled for drawing these sorts of deeds, certain persons authorised to receive

[51] Goguet, 1761, p. 33.

them, public repositories erected to preserve them, that they might be consulted upon occasion. For all civil society depends upon the security of those engagements which the members of it enter into with each other.

It was a long time before mankind found out the art of painting words, and rendering them permanent and durable. All deeds were then verbal, yet still it was necessary to authenticate and ascertain them. The method then used was to transact them in public and before witnesses.]

J'ai déja dit que les peuples avoient été assez de tems sans connoître l'art d'écrire: mais on avoit imaginé de bonne heure des moyens qui pouvoient en quelque sorte y suppléer. Le plus général et le plus usité etoit de composer en vers l'histoire des faits dont on vouloit conserver la mémoire, et de mettre ces vers en chant. Les législateurs ont fait usage de cet expédient pour consigner et faire passer leurs reglemens à la posterité. Les premieres loix de tous les peuples ont été composées en vers qu'on chantoit.

[I have remarked already, that it was long before mankind knew the art of writing; but they very early invented several methods to supply, in a good measure, that want. The method most commonly used was, to compose their histories in verse, and sing them. Legislators made use of this expedient to consign and hand down to posterity their regulations. The first laws of all nations were composed in verse, and sung.]

Le respect que dans tous les tems et dans tous les pays on a eu pour les ministres de la religion, a été cause qu'originairement on les chargea par préférence de l'administration de la justice. Les prêtres étoient les seuls juges qu'on connût chez les plus anciennes nations dont il soit parlé dans l'histoire.[52]

[The respect which has been paid, in all ages and countries, to the ministers of religion, was the reason that the administration of justice was originally committed to them. The most ancient nations mentioned in history, knew no other judges but their priests.][53]

Stability of persons and transmission of goods had ensured a state of society in which the public memory was both sacred and oral, in which history and law were indistinguishable, and the whole was preserved and communicated in song. If Ossian had been depicted as a legislator, a reader of Goguet would have had no difficulty believing in his poems. But only a sedentary people could have constructed such a culture; law and epic were based on the ploughshare. Wandering hunters and herdsmen could not have entered into social conventions stable enough to require that they be preserved for future reference, and it is a premise with Goguet that only when humans are settled on lands which they have appropriated and are cultivating, do they begin to produce goods and possess property that

[52] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 25–8. [53] Goguet, 1761, pp. 27–30.

must be distributed, the signs that are the medium of appropriation and assignment, or the ideas which only signs can generate in the mind or preserve in the memory. Wandering peoples can have very few ideas and very little memory; in extreme cases they may lose the use of signs and with it language, which is the point at which the subhuman was to make his appearance; the ideology of property was founded on the firmly expressed and ultimately materialist conviction that the articulation of consciousness depended upon signs and signs upon the appropriation and inheritance, the transmission and exchange, of both real and moveable possessions among a sedentary and productive population. Humans constantly in movement risked the loss of their humanity; only when the humans were settled and the goods moved through time and space could a social and human consciousness develop. There was no need to deduce natural law from the apprehensions of pure reason to understand that property and civility were based in material history.

Once there was sedentary agriculture and appropriation of land, there could be public space and commerce; the city and the state could appear. In Goguet's mind, agriculture and urbanisation were commensurate and took shape in the civilisation of the river valleys.

De tous les effets qu'a produit l'agriculture, le plus remarquable et le plus sensible a été de contraindre les peuples qui s'y sont adonnés à se fixer dans un même canton. Ce genre de vie les a obligé de construire des habitations solides, et même de les élever proche les uns des autres pour être à portée de se secourir et de s'entr'aider. C'est ainsi que se sont formées les villes. Les premieres dont il soit parlé dans l'histoire, ont commencé dans la Chaldée, dans la Chine, et dans l'Egypte, païs où de tems immemorial les peuples ont été adonnés à la culture de la terre. Suivant le témoignage des meilleurs écrivains de l'antiquité, la politique a commencé avec les villes, et la fondation des villes a donné naissance aux grands empires: aussi voyons-nous que les peuples cultivateurs ont été les premiers qui ayent formé des Etats puissans et considérables. Les empires de Babylone, d'Assyrie, de la Chine, etc. ont pris naissance dans les parties de l'Asia, où la culture des terres a toujours fait la principale occupation des peuples. L'Egypte en est un example pour le moins aussi frappant, sans parler des Grecs et des Romains, auxquels on peut joindre à bon titre les Mexicains et les Péruviens dans le nouveau continent. Tous ces peuples, par la connoissance de l'agriculture, ont été en état de se réunir en corps considérables dans un même lieu.[54]

[One of the most sensible and obvious effects of agriculture, is, that those people who applied themselves to it, were obliged to settle in a particular district. It has forced them to build houses of solid materials, and near to each other, that they might be better enabled to give mutual assistance. It is thus that cities were formed.

[54] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 34.

The first mentioned in history began in Chaldea, China, and Egypt, where the people had applied to agriculture from time immemorial. According to the best writers, the study of politics began with the building of cities; and the foundation of cities gave birth to great empires. Accordingly we see that those people who understood husbandry, formed the first great and powerful states. The Babylonian, Assyrian, and Chinese empires arose in those parts of Asia where the cultivation of the soil had always been the chief occupation of the people. Egypt is at least as striking an example of it, to say nothing of the Greeks and Romans, to whom we may with good reason join the Mexicans and Peruvians in the new world. All these nations, by their skill in agriculture, were enabled to unite in considerable bodies in one place.][55]

Goguet reiterates the reasons why wandering peoples cannot develop the critical mass needed for stable social relations. Civilisation is originally Asian; it is agricultural and urban, imperial and generally monarchical, but its early history has been very little preserved. We encounter the problems of chronology, and 'the dynasties of Assyria and Egypt' which were the 'top and cricket ball' of Gibbon's childhood;[56] problems so recalcitrant as to drive Goguet to conjectural restoration of the history of material culture. It is known, however, that Babylon, having been founded by Nimrod, must be the oldest of urban civilisations, though its history becomes unknown between the conquest by the Assyrian house of Ninus and the reign of Semiramis; he says:

Quant à la politique et à la conduite personnelle des anciens monarques d'Assyrie, on ne pourroit concevoir trop de mépris pour leur maniere de gouverner, si l'on s'en rapportoit au sentiment de presque tous les écrivains de l'antiquité. Ils accusent Ninias d'avoir donné à ses successeurs le mauvais exemple d'une conduite qu'ils n'ont trop bien imitée. Sans vouloir justifier ce prince d'une partie des défauts que dans tous les tems on a reproché aux Asiatiques, je trouve dans le peu qui nous reste sur son administration le modele d'un gouvernement extrêmement politique.

Le but principal que Ninias s'étoit proposé avoit été d'assurer la tranquilité du souverain, et de prevenir les cabales qui auroient pû troubler le repos de l'Etat. Les mesures qu'il avoit prises pour maintenir les peuples dans l'obéissance ne pouvoient être ni plus sages ni plus justes. Tous les ans on levoit par son ordre, dans chaque province, un certain nombre de troupes. Il faisoit camper cette armée autour de sa capital. A la fin de l'année il renvoyoit ces soldats chacun dans leur païs et en faisoit lever de nouveaux. Cette conduite avoit deux fins. D'un côté Ninias retenoit dans le devoir ses sujets, qui voyoient une armée nombreuse toujours prête à aller réduire les rebelles les plus eloignés. De l'autre, le changement annual de ces troupes empêchoit que les officiers et les soldats ne prissent de trop fortes liaisons les uns avec les autres. Ninias les mettoit par ce moyen hors de portée de former des

[55] Goguet, 1761, p. 36. Note that Goguet does not question the existence of cultivation, urbanisation and empire in Mesoamerica.

[56] A, pp. 59 (Memoir F), 122 (Memoir B).

entreprises séditieuses. Il avoit aussi attention de ne confier le gouvernement de ses provinces qu'à des sujets entierement dévoués à sa personne, et chaque gouverneur étoit obligé de venir tous les ans à Ninive rendre compte de sa conduite.[57]

[As to the politics and personal conduct of the ancient monarchs of Assyria, if we were to judge of them by the sentiments of almost all the writers of antiquity, we could not despise their manner of governing too much. They accuse Ninias of having set a bad example, which his successors but too well imitated. Without pretending to vindicate this prince from a share of those faults which the Asiatics have always been accused of, the few hints which are left us concerning his administration, seem to me to present us with the model of a very wise and prudent government.

The great end which Ninias had in view, was to prevent all cabals which might endanger the safety of the sovereign, or the tranquillity of the state. No measures could be more wise and effectual to this end than those which he pursued. He commanded a certain number of troops to be levied every year, in each province. This army formed an incampment round about the capital. At the end of the year, he dismissed these soldiers to their own homes, and commanded new ones to be raised in their room. This conduct answered two ends. On one hand, Ninias kept his subjects in obedience, by the sight of so numerous an army, always ready to march to chastise rebels at whatever distance. On the other hand, by the annual change of these troops, the officers and soldiers were prevented from contracting over strict connections, or forming seditious enterprises. He took special care likewise to commit the government of provinces to none but such as were entirely devoted to his person, and each governor was obliged to repair to Nineveh every year, to give an account of his conduct.][58]

Ninias, it is worth noting, seems to have solved the problem of the standing army. This passage would have interested Andrew Fletcher, with his schemes for reorganising Britain and Europe as confederations of cantonal militias,[59] and may well have caught the eye of the captain of Hampshire grenadiers, who had seen the English county militias organised by statute into a national home army serving several years in the field.[60] But Goguet was also addressing himself to the problem of how provinces might be effectively governed from a central palace. The oriental despot, surrounded by janissaries and by ministers alternating in the roles of satrap and chamberlain, and secluding himself from government to enjoy the nameless delights of the seraglio, was not exclusively a Greek myth; there are vivid accounts of him in the Chinese literature; but it is a stereotype which Goguet is anxious to demolish.

On fait un crime à Ninias d'avoir passé sa vie renfermé dans son palais. Cette politique étoit condamnable. Mais ce qu'on ajoûte qu'il n'affectoit de se cacher

[57] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 42–3. [58] Goguet, 1761, pp. 45–6.
[59] Robertson, 1985, 1997. [60] EEG, ch. 4.

ainsi que pour dérober au public la vue de ses debauches, ne me paroit pas bien prouvé. Au contraire, je trouve dans les mêmes auteurs qui imputent à ce Prince une conduite si blâmable, des faits qui ne peuvent se concilier avec l'idée qu'ils voudroient nous faire prendre de Ninias. Ces auteurs en effet conviennent que ce Prince eût toujours grand soin de mettre d'habiles généraux à la tête de ses armées, d'établir des gouverneurs experimentés dans les provinces, et des juges capables dans chaque ville: en un mot, qu'il pourvut à tout ce qui lui parut nécessaire pour maintenir le bon ordre dans ses Etats, et qu'il entretint la paix pendant tout son regne. Que peut-on demander de plus? Je suis persuadé que Ninias n'avoit affecté de se renfermer dans son palais et de se rendre presque inaccessible, que dans la vue d'inspirer plus de respect et de vénération pour sa personne . . .

Le modele de gouvernement tracé par Ninias fut exactement suivi par ses successeurs. Nous ne sçavons point le détail de leurs actions. Je remets aux Livres suivants à dire ce que je pense du jugement que les historiens Grecs ont porté de ces anciens Monarques.[61]

[They accuse Ninias of shutting himself up continually in his palace. This was no doubt a piece of wrong policy. But they seem to have no sufficient proof of what they further surmise, that this prince concealed his person only to hide his vices. On the contrary, we find in those very writers who give Ninias this infamous character, several facts which cannot be reconciled with the idea they would give us of this prince. These authors, in effect, agree that he always took care to place good generals at the head of his armies, experienced governors in his provinces, and able judges in his cities; in a word, that he neglected nothing that appeared to him necessary to preserve order and tranquillity in his dominions; and that he maintained peace during his whole reign. What can be asked more? I am persuaded Ninias had no other view in shutting himself up in his palace, and living almost inaccessible, but to inspire his subjects with greater respect and veneration for his person . . .

This plan of government formed by Ninias, was exactly followed by his successors. We know not the detail of their actions. In the following books, we shall have occasion to speak our thoughts of the sentiments of the Greek writers concerning these ancient monarchs.][62]

It may be the memory of that great neo-Hellenistic King of France who had died two years before his own birth in 1716, and whose rule was already being condemned by some as despotic and oriental, that Goguet is defending here. Bossuet and Voltaire agreed with the *thèse royale* that civilisation flourished under protective monarchy, and Goguet is going further in insisting that it originated in the urbanised kingdoms of Mesopotamia and Egypt. He even turns from the house of Shem to that of Ham in presenting Egypt, rather than Babylon, as the parent of European civilisation, since the Romans learned the arts and sciences from the Greeks and the Greeks from

[61] Goguet, 1758, 1, p. 43. [62] Goguet, 1761, p. 46.

the Egyptians. *Ex oriente lux*. Only from the great cities of the agricultural valleys could the wandering savages and herdsmen of Cyclopean Greece have learned civilised living; Goguet will have none of Smith's suggestion that they might have carried out their own synoecism and founded a polis different in character from Nineveh or Memphis. He has resort to the thesis – then normal among classical scholars – that Hellenic culture was the fruit of Egyptian and Phoenician imperialism. The first wave of Afro-Asian settlers he calls the Titans, whose chieftains – Saturn, Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto – were deified after their deaths and gave their names to the Olympic pantheon. But the Titans were shepherd kings; they lived in tents and built no cities; and once their line failed, Greece reverted to savagery, just as America would if the Europeans were to abandon it. The natives drifted off into the forests and became savages once again.[63] It was left to a second wave of Egyptians – Cecrops at Athens, Danaus and Phoroneus at Argos – to resume the *mission civilisatrice*, which they did by advancing beyond the stage of *conquistadores* to become *encomienderos*. Like modern settlers in the New World, they built houses, cultivated fields, and persuaded the indigenes to emerge from the bush and live under their law and tutelage.[64] Greek history could now begin, but Goguet had no intention of writing it. In language which resembles and outdistances that of Voltaire in the *Essai sur les Moeurs*, he concluded his *premier livre*:

> Passons à des objets plus généraux et plus intéressants; considerons les peuples sous un nouveau point de vue: examinons quelles ont été les suites de l'établissement des sociétés à l'égard des arts, des sciences, du commerce, et de la navigation: voyons par rapport à la guerre, les effets que l'ambition a produits, et les progrès que cette fatale passion a fait faire l'art militaire: suivons la marche de l'esprit humain dans ces différentes branches, et tâchons de nous former, d'après le peu de monumens qui nous restent, une idée de l'état des peuples dans ces siécles reculés: commençons par les Arts.[65]

> [Let us now proceed to more general and interesting objects, to consider mankind in a new point of view; to examine what were the consequences of the establishment of government and laws, with regard to the arts, sciences, commerce, and navigation; and to see, with respect to war, the effects which ambition has produced in it, and the progress which that fatal passion has made in the military art: in a word, let us follow the footsteps of the human mind, and endeavour to form a just idea of the state of mankind in these remote ages, from the few historical monuments which remain. We shall begin with arts.][66]

[63] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 59–61.
[64] Ibid. pp. 61–2. The French and Spanish terms used above are not from Goguet.
[65] Goguet, 1758, 1, pp. 65–6. [66] Goguet, 1761, p. 70.

Goguet's diffusionist orientalism owed more to the *thèse royale* than to the biblical chronology, and indeed set up some potential tensions with the latter. He saw civilisation originating and progressing under the guidance of a succession of *rois soleils*, and developed the paradigm of benign monarchy so far that, along with the stereotype of oriental despotism, he rejected several of the foundation myths of western culture. There was no room in his history for Hellenic warrior clansmen synoecising themselves and establishing a polis whose autonomy and isonomy made it inherently different from a royal city in Mesopotamia, or for a hold of robbers in the piedmont of Latium evolving a *res publica* whose freedom made it capable of conquering the known world. There was none – except by an implication which reversed the whole meaning of the narrative – for a shepherd people unable to bear the royal discipline of Egypt and wandering forty years in the wilderness (an experience which should have reduced them to the lowest savagery), but emerging, thanks to divine favour, with a code of laws unlike any other and a legislator capable of writing the only reliable history of mankind since the creation. How odd of God to choose the Jews; certainly he did not operate through them according to the laws which governed the growth of civilisation. Goguet was a devout man, and he will have seen covenanted Israel before the Babylonian captivity as a *civitas dei*, like the church after the fall of the mystical Babylon, a community which lived not as the world lived. But his history of the world excluded the non-urban barbarians from creative action and came close to adding the Greeks to their number. The conquest and Hellenisation of Persia and Egypt by Alexander and his successors looks in his scheme like a successful counter-raid by partially civilised marcher lords, and the great Greek-speaking monarchies with their centres at Alexandria, Antioch and Byzantium owe more to the Two Rivers and the Two Lands than to Athens, Macedon or republican Rome.[67] There are perspectives to which all this is a valuable corrective; but Goguet's commitment to the *thèse royale* was so complete that he had little contribution to make to the Machiavellian dialectic of the *Decline and Fall*. In spite of his biblicism, he was closer to Voltaire than to Montesquieu; because of it, he was closer to Bossuet than to either, or to Gibbon; but his chosen subject did not require him to write the history of either the church or the republic.

His significance in the contextualisation of the *Decline and Fall* lies in his theory of savagery and civilisation. In the first place, he shows us that such a theory could be developed as effectively from premises founded in Scripture

[67] Here he anticipates the perspective adopted by Springborg, 1992.

as from those founded in natural law. In the second place, he shows us that Enlightened theses of appropriation, exchange and the growth of manners could be set forth in the context of absolute and enormous monarchy as well as in that of constitutional or republican polities. In the third place – and this is where he is directly relevant to Gibbon – he presents us with a theory of progress involving two stages of development rather than four: a vagrant and feral stage of savagery, embracing both the hunter and the herdsman, and a sedentary stage of civilisation, in which agriculture is immediately the parent of urbanisation and commerce. The four stages with which we are familiar have either been telescoped or have not yet become differentiated. We have some way to go before arriving at the special importance which the shepherd stage possessed for Adam Smith and his circle, and may ask ourselves whether it possessed that importance for Gibbon.

CHAPTER 4

Thomas Carte: Japhetic settlers in the western islands

(1)

Goguet – politically correct by the standards of today – affirmed the Mesopotamian and Egyptian origins of urban civilisation, rejected the stereotype of oriental despotism and held that Egyptians and Phoenicians had rescued the primitive Greeks from savagery. But he was too completely a Parisian, of the Palais and the Ile de la Cité, to gaze long towards the plains where Europe disappeared in Asia,[1] and we should not look to him for the history of the shepherd peoples sweeping out of the steppe. That we turn for this to a work by an Anglo-British author follows from the circumstance that the archipelago off the north-western coasts of the main European peninsula had a cultural frontier of its own, where manorial ploughmen met with highland and Gaelic cattle-drivers and chose to consider them barbarians for reasons not only literary.[2] The written sources available to English agrarian and monastic culture, however, obliged the latter to provide classical and scriptural accounts of the pastoralists and their origins, and we now enter the world described by Colin Kidd,[3] where the existence of nations was explained by concepts neither nationalist nor philosophical. In an earlier volume, Gibbon was found reading, and despising, a work called *Remains of Japhet*,[4] which showed how the co-existence of herdsmen and ploughmen in the western islands could be biblically accounted for. The second work which it is illuminating to study as a prelude to Gibbon's ninth chapter employs a Noachic chronology, and there is no sign that Gibbon found difficulties with its doing so; but it presents a history of western and northern barbarism at a distance from Greeks and Egyptians sufficient to throw a different light on the relations between savagery, pasturage and agriculture.

[1] Cf. Voltaire, NCG, pp. 79–80. [2] Bartlett, 1993; Gillingham, 2001, pp. 24–8.
[3] Kidd, 1999. [4] NCG, pp. 357–61.

This is the first volume, published in 1747, of Thomas Carte's *A General History of England*.[5] Carte was a Jacobite, and the publication of his history had been in various ways impeded; it is said that only the intervention of Queen Caroline permitted its appearance, and it seems certain that Edward Gibbon II, the historian's father, had been among Carte's subscribers.[6] In reading this book, therefore, we are penetrating Gibbon's family history, and the milieu in which he had grown up and acquired some of his less comfortable memories. Carte was not an obsolete or archaic writer; the aggressive Protestantism, modernity and commercialism, perfectly compatible with the Jacobite mind, are evident in his text, and he was a historian of considerable powers. The *General History of England* should be required reading for any student tempted, as some still are, to describe Hume's work of a decade later as a Tory history; here is the real thing, and it is not negligible.[7]

Carte's biblical chronology is part of his history of ancient kingdoms, and this in turn is part of the history of Britain which is a necessary aspect of his history of England. The enlightened history of the progress of civilisation, which he fits into a scriptural history of mankind as easily as Goguet was doing, is, furthermore, part of the history of patriarchal and feudal kingship which he learned from Sir Robert Filmer and Dr Robert Brady, the royalist scholars of the preceding century.[8] He expanded, rather than departed from, Filmer's attempt to demonstrate the continuity of patriarchal kingship from the Book of Genesis by making it part of the history of postdiluvian mankind. We re-enter the world of humanist chronology when we encounter a genealogy which makes Japhet the progenitor of Tirax, Gomer, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter and Mercury; the later figures euhemerised as gods after their deaths.[9] All this Carte derives, as perhaps Goguet did, from the biblicist and Celticist scholar Pezron and the Huguenot Simon Pelloutier,[10] and it would have been possible for Gibbon to deride him, along with Rudbeck, as one of the credulous antiquarians of the previous age; indeed, there is a footnote which may be said to do so.[11] But genealogy becomes a bedfellow with sociology when we learn that Jupiter was the first legislator to

[5] Carte, 1747. [6] Turnbull, 1987.
[7] There is an account of Carte in Hicks, 1996, pp. 159–69. [8] Pocock, 1957, 1987.
[9] Carte, 1747, pp. 9–15; all quotations are from the first volume.
[10] For these figures, the scheme of Japhetic history and the ways in which Celtic, Germanic and Scythian *gentes* were fitted into it, see Kidd, 1999, especially pp. 66–70, 188–200. Kidd's book is an invaluable introduction to the intellectual world inhabited by Carte. Pelloutier, like Jean Barbeyrac and Isaac de Beausobre, was a member of the Huguenot circle in Berlin.
[11] Chapter 14, n. 8, where we read that the reality of King Coil (or Cole), father of the Empress Helena, 'has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England, compiled by Mr. Carte'. Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 403.

civilise the nomadic Gomerians or Titans, and that this line of kings led the descendants of Japhet westwards, clearing and settling the great Caledonian woods which had grown up in Europe after the Flood, until they reached the extremities of Spain and Britain. Carte's Titans play a more positive role than Goguet's in bringing about the transition to agriculture and commerce:

> The earth was a scene of continual disorders, murders and rapines and all kinds of violence, till the reign of *Jupiter*, who effectually suppressed every thing of that nature, and by his constant vigilance and great skill in the affairs of government, and continual attention to whatever might promote the public good, secured his subjects in the enjoyment of their properties, and animated their industry in cultivating and extending their plantations. The long and peaceful reign of a prince of this temper and turn of politicks was of all others the most proper and likely season for such an attempt as the planting of *Britain*.
>
> But as that of his successor was full as favourable for such a plantation, *Mercury* treading in his father's and uncle's[12] steps, sending out colonies as they did, encouraging commerce (the never-failing means of making a people rich and a state powerful) more remarkably, and extending it farther than either of them had done, for which his memory was distinguished all over the world in the succeeding ages; it seems impossible to conceive but that *Great Britain*, so nearly adjoining to countries that had been peopled some ages before, must, at the latest, be planted in one of those reigns of peace, of industry, of plantations, and of commerce, which took up together the space of a century. It was probably in the former that the first *Gomerian* or *Celtic* colonies were settled in this island, which must consequently have been planted two thousand years before the Christian aera. Ill therefore did the *British* bard consult the glory of his nation; who, enamoured of the beauties of *Virgil's Aeneis*, and fond of making his countrymen vye with the old *Romans* in the nobleness of their descent, first devised the story of *Brutus* and derived their original from the *Trojans*, thus cutting them off at once from nine hundred years of their real antiquity.[13]

Though coming from the east (it is not clear where Carte thought they were seated), these kings are of the line of Japhet, and do not need Semitic or Hamitic help in legislating the colonisation and settlement of western Europe. Carte has enlarged the role of the Titans far beyond the transitory nomadic incursion into Hellas to which Goguet confines them. The Gomerians are the Celtic and Teutonic peoples,[14] to whom nearly all western settlement is assigned, but their history is complicated by the presence of nomadism, itself of eastern but also of northern origin. Carte is beginning

[12] I.e., Jupiter and Pluto.
[13] Carte, 1747, pp. 20–1. The British bard is Geoffrey of Monmouth or his supposed source.
[14] Kidd, 1999, for the pre-nationalist belief that Celts, Teutons and Scythians were a single stock.

to address the problems presented by the existence in Britain of two Celtic cultures, one agricultural but the other pastoral.

> Thus were most of the western provinces of *Germany* peopled by the *Celtae*; till the *Cimbri*, or (as the *Greeks*, who gave the name of *Scythae* to all the northern nations, called them) *Celto-Scythae*, were forced by an irruption of the *Scythian Nomades* [n.: . . . being driven out of their old seats by the *Massagetae* . . .] to quit their settlement on the *Palus Maeotis*: And marching gradually from time to time more westward till they came into *Germany*, drove the *Belgae* out of their territories; and thereby occasioned some alterations in the state both of *Gaule* and *Britain*.[15]

The classic pattern of nomad history has begun to appear – one horde displacing another in a westward movement out of the Eurasian steppe into the clearings of forest Europe – and will produce marked effects on the stadial image of the herdsman as a savage predecessor of the ploughman. But the Belgae whom the Cimbri expel from Germany are the creative actors in this story. Themselves an agricultural people of the heavy plough, they find themselves in Gaul, Britain and Ireland – where they take the name of *Fir Bolg*[16] – settling among an older Celtic population, whose way of life was pastoral rather than agricultural, but transhumant rather than nomadic. This had made them approach the hunting or savage condition, among whom the Belgae appeared like Europeans settling in America.

> Commerce and husbandry had been their chief employments in *Gaule* . . . used to live in society; not dispersed like the *Brigantes* in woods for the sake of hunting, their chief employment as well as diversion, but in houses contiguous to each other, in towns and villages: and their own security rendering the same manner as necessary here . . . towns and cities began not to be founded . . . without giving more umbrage and offence to the old natives, than our late settlement in *Georgia* hath done to the *Creek Indians*, there being still woods enough for those that did not care to fall into the *Belgian* way of living to gratify their passion for hunting.[17]

There seems no need to supply the Creek comment on this. The image of Celtic Britain as a dual culture continues later:

> The *Belgic* colonies, when they came over hither, first began to till the ground to build houses substantial enough to last for a considerable time, as well as contiguous to each other, and to live together in towns and villages, setting the others an example which they did not care to follow. The *Britains* still went on in their old way, living dispersed; the Gentlemen in the high grounds and woods, where they first fixed their mansions; and the common people in the lower situations, that afforded pasture for their cattle, which they drove from place to place, according to the season of the year and the nature of the soil, keeping them in the marshy

[15] Carte, 1747, p. 22. [16] Ibid. p. 23. [17] Ibid. pp. 25–6.

and wet countries in the summer, and removing to such as lay higher during the winter . . . Thus they led a life not unlike that of the ancient *Nomades*; and being obliged to frequent removes, they lived either like them under tents, which might easily be carried from one place to another, or else erected little cabins of the branches of trees daubed over with mud to cover them, for the time they stayed in any quarter of a country.[18]

Carte was the biographer of the great Anglo-Irish magnate James Butler, duke of Ormonde,[19] and the image of wild Irish following their creaghs is not far from his page; the mud-and-wattle cabins may also be American. The Belgae are much in the situation of English colonists in Connaught or Georgia, and the ideology of the plough has made its appearance and begun to develop. Though Carte was a Jacobite isolationist who denounced both William of Normandy and William of Orange for involving the islands in the affairs of the continent,[20] it will be remarked how far his image of the growth of civilisation is an image of maritime settlement, plantation and colonisation; indeed, if it could only be under the settled monarchies of Jupiter and Mercury that Britain could be planted and inhabited, it is not quite clear why transhumant herdsmen were there before agriculturalists (as in the *Remains of Japhet*[21] they are not). But in the mixed economy of Celtic Britain, it is agriculture, as it was for Goguet, which is the parent of urbanisation, commerce and law. Druids, bards and brehons make their appearance, and Carte goes into considerable detail about the growth of oral as well as written culture as systems of social communication in settled society.

The use of letters was not known in the world till several hundred years after the institution of the *Druids*, as well as of the *Curetes*, who not being able to give their disciples any instruction in religion or learning, or any rules for their conduct, in writing, were forced to put them into verse; the measure whereof was a great assistance to the memory. The Druidical compositions of that kind . . . were admirably contrived for this purpose. They were all adapted to musick, every word being harmonious; the strongest and most expressive repeated in a beautiful manner; and all of them ranged in an order established by rules, well known and universally received in such compositions: Each verse so connected with and depending on those which either preceded or followed it, that if any one line in a stanza be remembered, all the rest must be called to mind, and it is almost impracticable to forget or mistake in any. 'The British poetry, as well as language, hath a peculiarity which perhaps no other language in the world hath; so that the *British* poets in all ages, and to this day call their art *Cyfrinach y Berdd*, i.e. the *Secret of the Poets*. Knowing this art of the poets, it is impossible that any one word of

[18] Ibid. p. 76. [19] Carte, 1735–6. [20] Carte, 1747, pp. 426, 450–2. [21] NCG, pp. 357–61.

the language, which is to be found in poetry, should be pronounced in any other manner than is there used; so that without a transformation of the whole language, not one word could be altered.'

[n. These are the words of a very judicious *Welsh* antiquary (Mr. *Lewis Morris*) perfectly well versed in the writings of the old *British* poets; who refers me to Dr. *John David Rhys*'s grammar, and Mr. *Prichard*'s preface to it, for a description of this *Secret of the Poets*, and adds that though at first sight it may be naturally thought their poetry is clogged with so many rules that it is impossible to write a poem of common sense in the language; yet the vast number of flexions of consonants in it, and the variations in declensions, *etc.*, make it almost as copious as four or five languages added together; and consequently a poet in the *Cambrian language*, notwithstanding the strictness of its rules, hath as great a scope and use of words as in any other tongue whatsoever; as it will appear from a perusal of the ancient *British* poets.]

It was owing to a like ignorance of letters that the most ancient laws among the Greeks were couched in verse; they were called νόμοι, or songs, because the way of publishing them was by singing them to the people; and the *Lacedaemonians*, being used to this way of preserving their laws by memory, grew so fond of it that they would never suffer them to be written . . . And the mode prevailed so generally that even after the invention of letters, none of the old *Greek* historians wrote in prose till the time of *Cadmus Milesius*.[22]

This is pre-Ossianic scholarship; it makes us aware that while David Hume was right when he detected that Macpherson's compilations were inauthentic, he was not necessarily right when he insisted that Gaelic oral culture was incapable of conserving bardic poetry from one generation to another. Carte proceeds to an account of the reception of Greek and Latin writing in Britain, from which it is clear that oral culture characterised both Belgic agriculturalists and Briton foresters.

This ignorance, in which those of *Spaine*, *Gaule*, and *Germany*, seem to be equally involved, was a natural effect of the military genius of our ancestors, the contemplative life of their *Druids*, and the happy situation of these islands: happy in being divided from the rest of the world,[23] and free from the calamities of war and the inundations of barbarous nations, which from time to time ravaged most parts of the continent; but the more unknown by being seated in the remotest corner of the globe towards the west and north, beyond the bounds of what was for some ages reputed habitable by the ancients. The east, from whence light breaks upon the earth to enliven nature, first gave birth to letters; which seem to have been invented about the time of *Moses*, whose account of the origin of the world, and history of the *Israelites* from the call of *Abraham* to their settlement in the land of *Canaan*, is the most ancient work that is known, and the first that was

[22] Carte, 1747, pp. 33–4. Cf. Goguet, p. 57 above.
[23] *Divisos ab orbe Britannos*; a favourite quotation. This is another flash of Jacobite isolationism.

ever written. The neighbouring nations soon profited of the discovery, and *Cadmus* brought letters from *Phoenicia* into *Greece*; where they found a reception answerable to their utility; laying the foundation of that learning which hath distinguished the *Greeks* above all other nations, and contributing to form those great men among the ancients, whose works are still read with pleasure and admiration. The *Phoenicians* might have done us the same service; for in a few ages after their settlements at *Carthage* and *Gades*, they began to trade to these parts, though they never planted any colony in *Britain*. It is only by such fixed establishments, with which the natives of a country have a continual intercourse, that a foreign language can be communicated, and strange customs, difficult to acquire and promising no immediate advantage, can be introduced. The *Phoenicians* were occasional visitors, sailors and merchants, whose sole view was gain . . . it cannot be thought that they should take any more care to instruct and improve the *Britains* in knowledge than we have done in the case of the inhabitants we trade with on the coasts of *Africa*, or of the *Indians* that live on the back of our plantations in *America*. It was inconsistent with the tenour of their received politics, and contrary to their interest, the all-powerful and domineering passion of that kind of men, to furnish the natives with any means of knowledge or helps to a correspondence with other countries; which must in time have diminished the exorbitant profits that the *Phoenicians* made of the others ignorance and simplicity.

Cadmus, it is plain, was a legislator rather than a merchant; intellectuals who admire commercial civilisation seldom think much of commercial travellers. The crucial point, however, is that it was the Romans who introduced letters to Britain because they made settlements there. Carte explains the Roman occupation as the fruit partly of republican expansiveness and partly of a social alliance between Romans and Belgic agriculturalists. On the one hand, the Romans

were formed for war, like the *Lacedaemonians*, by the very constitution of their republic: But though a passion so adapted to the nature, the maxims, and the politics of the state, and so proper to advance its grandeur, may well enough be deemed a branch of that public spirit, without which no country can be great or happy; yet the noblest passions, when they grow boundless, become romantic, and produce effects infinitely mischievous to the public, and that sometimes make even heroes appear ridiculous. *Rome*, labouring under the weight of her own grandeur and corrupted by the wealth of her conquered provinces, could not yet be satisfied without extending her conquests to the ocean.[24]

It is probably Caligula who is meant here; his behaviour is at once quixotic and corrupt. Agriculture, we must remember, begets commerce, and Roman imperialism under the first Caesars was driven by the search for wealth as well as for land. On the other hand, the Belgae were by this time

[24] Carte, 1747, p. 81.

interested in trade as well as cultivation, and a cross-Channel commerce was developing.

> In consequence of such friendly disposition, there was a continual intercourse between the people of *Britain* and the subjects of the *Roman* empire; the principal of the *British* nobility resorted frequently to *Rome* itself, and some of them were there educated. The *Roman* publicans, settled here for collecting the customs of merchandize, had all the opportunities they could wish of observing the nature, situation and condition of the country, as well as the circumstances, strength or weakness, dissensions, views and interests of the various clans and people that inhabited this island. Thus *Britain*, terrible whilst it was unknown, became familiar to the *Romans*; who now finding it an easier matter than they once imagined, to reduce it into the form of a province, soon forgot the political maxims of *Augustus* . . .[25]

For their part, the Belgae were now an agricultural and commercial people, and lacking a disciplined and formidable army of their own, were unlikely to stand up well against the forays of their transhumant neighbours. Something like a confederacy of pastoral clans had been formed, and

> the *Belgick Britains*, thus losing ground every day, and in danger of being reduced one after another by that powerful nation of the ancient Britains, seem to have thought they had no other or better party to take, to prevent further encroachments from an old enemy, whose genius and manner of life, so different from their own, would (if once their masters) put them upon destroying that foreign commerce which was the chief means of their comfortable subsistence, than to make an early submission to the *Romans*, and thereby engage the protection of a mighty emperor, whom they were not able with all their united force to oppose. These probably were the reasons why the *Belgic* colonies were so easily subjected by the *Romans*, and assisted them afterwards in the subduing the rest of *Britain*.[26]

(11)

Carte published these words a year or two after the defeat of the Jacobites by the Anglo-Hanoverian and Scottish armies. A Warwickshire man himself,[27] his own Jacobitism was of a different social character; but George II in the role of Emperor Claudius, which is where this passage seems to place him, is not more incongruous than Butcher Cumberland in that of Judas Maccabeus, which he plays by implication in Handel's oratorio celebrating his victory. Be these analogies as they may, the strategy Carte was pursuing enabled him to present the history of Roman and post-Roman Britain in terms of interaction between Romanised British agriculturalists

[25] Ibid. p. 97. [26] Ibid. p. 100. [27] DNB, 'Carte, Thomas.'

and Caledonian or Gaelic pastoral clans. The Belgae are made to share the effeminacy and corruption of a Roman

> military government, which out of jealousy of the subject did not care that anybody should be used to arms, or skilled in what might be of service in war, but their own mercenaries . . . The *Roman* policy . . . had particular colleges of men, to whom the fabrick of arms was appropriated, and took care to have artificers and workmen of all kinds among the soldiers of their legions.[28]

We have returned to the rhetoric of the country ideology and the Decline and Fall.[29] With the withdrawal of the legions, the now unwarlike Roman-Britons found themselves 'infested' by a variety of warrior herdsmen: the Caledonian Picts, whose 'view was rather to plunder than to fix a settlement; and in the independent condition of their *clans*, they were not fitted to make a conquest';[30] the Britons of Strathclyde, whose lands 'were not tilled; nor had the inhabitants any fixed habitation, but lived like *Nemetes* or *Nomades*, in tents or slight huts; attending their cattle whilst they grazed, and driving them from place to place for the convenience of pasture';[31] and the Scots, a Scythian and Cantabrian people arriving by way of Spain and Ireland.[32] This last identification was to involve Carte posthumously in a fierce debate between James Macpherson and John Whittaker concerning the priorities of Gaelic settlement, but it is only one feature of the British history which is the necessary context of Carte's history of England.

This in turn is only a part of a history of the post-Roman *Volkerwänderung*, and of the systems of landholding and kinship which it entailed, as having Celtic rather than Gothic origins. The word 'clan' has begun to appear in Carte's text, often in association with the life of transhumant pastoralists; but he is capable of using it in explanation of the appropriations of land, and the establishment of agriculture, by extended kinship groups.

> It is very reasonable to suppose that when *colonies* (from a corruption of which word that of *Clan* is derived) passed into any country to people it, they settled in distinct tribes and families. This is a matter of fact warranted by the *Mosaic* account of the plantation of the world, and is agreeable to the uniform relation of the most ancient *Heathen* writers. Nor is it less reasonable to suppose that upon each tribe or family's settling in a certain territory, the head of it, keeping what he saw fit for himself, allotted to the several branches distinct portions and dividends of land which they were to cultivate and improve, and which thereby became their

[28] Carte, 1747, p. 173.
[29] Ibid. p. 147: 'the haughty *Romans*, who, slaves as they were to every tyrant put upon them by a standing army, yet fancied themselves to be lords of the world . . . '
[30] Carte, 1747, p. 153. [31] Ibid. p. 175. [32] Ibid. pp. 151–61.

property, with some dependance however or subordination to the *chief* of the family, who was naturally the judge to determine all disputes that might arise between the several proprietors. Such decisions, multiplying as new cases arose, and serving for precedents to others, formed in time a body of common or customary law peculiar to each tribe; for before laws come to be fixed and established, different decisions are an unavoidable consequence of different judges proceeding by the light of their own reason, and without the direction of any president;[33] and families growing daily more numerous, those that were governed by different laws and usages were considered as so many distinct nations, called by the *Greeks* ἔθνη, by the *Romans Gentes* or *civitates*.[34]

Appropriation and agriculture may be accomplished by the mere settlement of a colonising clan, without the benign intervention of a legislator king; it is not even certain, though it is probable, that common customs need to be remembered and transmitted by the *cyfrinach y berdd*. The origin of agriculture, dependent tenure and common law in the colonisation of land by previously nomadic tribes[35] permitted the Jacobite historian to establish patriarchal kingship not merely in God's gift of the earth to Adam, but in the natural progress of mankind. It had been a problem for Filmer that the individualisation of citizens in the primitive assembly left it unclear how the authority of the prince over patriarchal family heads could be patriarchal itself; but the Celtic 'clan' deepened the meaning of the Greek or Roman 'tribe' until it meant once again an extended kinship group under a lineage head who was the father of all his folk. Carte was able to develop this concept, and at the same time to situate it at that most crucial of all moments in civil history, the transition from pasturage to agriculture; and if tenure and judicature of property could develop under patriarchal authority, so might the commerce which immediately accompanied agriculture. There was no need in this scheme of a revolutionary break between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*; progress occurred naturally.

It was a further problem, which may separate Brady's thinking from Filmer's,[36] that a feudal lord was hardly even figuratively the father of his vassals; homage was voluntary to a point approaching individualism. Carte was able to overcome this difficulty by appeal to the history of legal fiction, and at the same time to provide a gentile history of barbarian kingship in post-Roman Europe. Immediately after the statement that the Pictish clans aimed at plunder rather than conquest, he wrote:

[33] Possibly a variant spelling of 'precedent'. [34] Carte, 1747, pp. 77–8.

[35] See ibid., p. 108n, where Carte explains that '*Wallenses*' or 'Welsh' is derived not from *wealh*, 'a stranger', but from *walen* (as in 'Wallons', 'Vandals', 'Wends', etc.), which Grotius has shown to mean 'nomads'.

[36] Daly, 1979.

This was an advantage reserved to some of their more enterprizing chieftains; who having the supreme command in war, and opportunities of acquiring glory as well as of extending their territories, made use of both to form a royalty to themselves; and being at once superior in power, in reputation, and in a title often given in the first transports of a great success, easily brought them by degrees into dependance and vassalage. Thus is it that all the kingdoms of *Europe* were formed out of the ruins of the *Roman* empire; continual wars making a standing General necessary, and each conqueror enjoying his acquired or accumulated territories in the same manner as he did his particular patrimony, and with the same authority as he had over the *clan*, of which he was the natural head in the way of a lineal succession; according to that well known maxim which hath always been received in *France* and other countries of *Europe*, and in a great measure also in this: 'That whatever accedes and is united to the king's *domaine* adopts its nature; and (whatever it was before) becomes from thence subject to the same regulations and modes of descent.'[37]

A feudal kingdom is a metaphorised clan, and its king a metaphorised patriarch. The point is intensified some twenty pages later.

It hath already been observed from *Dio* that the *Picts*, the *Maeatae*, as well as the *Caledonians*, were in the beginning of the third century subject to no common head; but lived after the primitive manner of all the northern nations, in separate clans under the command of their particular chieftains, succeeding lineally to that authority which the first progenitor of a family enjoyed by the law of nature over the several branches thereof, and transmitted to his posterity according to the course of nature, in the order of their respective lines of descent. The long series of peace and tranquillity which reigned in those northern parts of *Britain*, from the time of *Dio* to AD 360, afforded no occasion for any change in this part of the constitution during that interval: but afterwards, when the *Picts*, strengthened by the succours of the *Scots* and emboldened by the decay of the *Roman* power, entertained views of conquest and embarked in continual wars to extend their territories, a General in chief became absolutely necessary. This charge naturally devolved upon the most considerable of those chieftains and the enlargement of territory which of course accrued to him from his conquests soon enabled him to advance that command, which in its original seemed to be temporary in regard to all but his own clan, into an hereditary royalty descending lineally to his children, like the sovereignty of the clan of which he was the particular chieftain. Thus is it that the kingdom of the *Franks* in *Gaul*, the *Gothic* kingdoms in various parts of *Europe*, and those of the *Saxon Heptarchy* in *England* were formed; and thus I conceive the kingdom of the *Picts* was founded soon after AD 360, in proportion as they gained ground in the *Roman* territories. Hence, whatever genealogies are produced of a race or series of princes antecedent to that time, I look upon them only as particular enumeration of the first king's ancestors, as merely chieftains of that clan which he had a natural right to command, and not as monarchs ruling

[37] Carte, 1747, p. 153.

over various clans and nations united under their government, in which last sense the style of *king* is now generally understood. As the lands conquered by the *Pictish* kings were of too large extent to be occupied and cultivated only by those of their particular clan, great quantities thereof must necessarily be distributed to other adventurers: and both these sorts of vassals being blended together, so as, after a few generations, to be no longer distinguishable from one another, they became equally obliged to pay to their common sovereign that obedience which his own clan was always obliged to by the law of nature. Hence, in all appearance, arose that maxim of the law of *England*, as well as *Scotland*, so much insisted on in *Calvin*'s case, that there is a *natural allegiance due to the person of a king, succeeding lineally to the crown, by inherent birth-right and proximity of blood*. Hence likewise, as accessories adopt the nature of the principal, and become subject from the time of their coalition or incorporation to the same incidents and modes of conveyance and descent, the *Pictish* kings came to have the same authority over their acquired and adopted vassals, as they had before enjoyed over their natural ones; and the crown, with all its rights and prerogatives, descended lineally to their children, in the same regular manner and the same natural order, as the headship of their particular *clan* had ever used to descend.[38]

Into this pattern of emerging kingship, patriarchal by both natural and common law, Carte had no difficulty in introducing the settlements of the English in Britain. The ancient Saxons had been ruled by the chieftains of clans, accompanied by *comitatus* or war-bands of young mounted noblemen, and on their establishment in Britain these had become kings and vassals by exactly the same metamorphosis as had already been described.[39] The only difference between a 'Celtic' and a 'Gothic' thesis of the history of western barbarism was that the word 'clan' could be used with greater assurance in the former case, and served to establish the gentile and Japhetic character of prehistoric European society. German-speaking peoples entered into a history whose structures had been outlined long before, and the feudal kingdoms were assured of their patriarchal foundations. It had been a problem for historians since the sixteenth century to explain just how the barbarian war-band had become a system of landholding,[40] and the critic may wonder whether Carte's invocation of the clan had solved it. The historian, however, will note how effectively he had rendered patriarchal monarchy compatible with the progress of society to agriculture and commerce. When his history reached the Norman Conquest, he was able to link it with that of Brady – whom he greatly admired – by maintaining that the miscellaneous yet uniform proto-feudal customs of the barbarian invaders had been codified by the Lombard lawyers of the twelfth century, and that the 'feudal law' brought into England by the Normans consisted

[38] Ibid. pp. 176–7. [39] Ibid. pp. 360–1. [40] Pocock, 1957, ch. 1.

mainly in the imposition of more rigorous services upon tenures originally allodial.[41] With that Carte was ready to embark on his version of the history of the ancient constitution and the feudal law in medieval England – a field into which readers of this book need not follow him, since Gibbon was resolved to avoid it.

(III)

Biblicism and patriarchalism separate Goguet and Carte from the *philosophe* world of the Parisian Enlightenment and the whiggish world of the Scottish Enlightenment, with both of which we are accustomed to consider the *Decline and Fall* intimately connected. They raise questions, however, about the primacy which we conventionally accord to either Enlightenment; that is, they make it plain that it was possible to make significant advances in tracing the progress of society from savagery to commerce without belonging to either. The biblical chronology and the myth of the Confusion of Tongues offered no obstacle to the development of such historical schemes, and obliged neither Goguet nor Carte to say anything to which Gibbon need take much exception; even the Noachic genealogies and the euhemerisation of the Olympic gods were secondary strategies compared with the natural history of the means of subsistence, which however exerted no pressure to replace them. Within the received chronology it was perfectly possible to develop complex schemes of the stages of society, tending to consist of two stages rather than four, but with the transition from pasture to agriculture lodged firmly at the centre, whether one were examining the origins of the Near Eastern city civilisations with Goguet or that of the feudal kingdoms of barbaric Europe with Carte. The same central position was occupied by the identity of agriculture with commerce; it was sedentary living and the appropriation of lands which created the social space necessary to state, market and culture, to the movement of laws, goods and ideas. Both Goguet and Carte seem to have held that communication across this space and time could be effected by such oral mechanisms as the 'secret of the bards'; there is a marked divergence here from Gibbon's Humean insistence that only literacy permits social memory and an exchange of ideas, but it is the only tension between his thought and theirs we have so far discovered. The ideology of commerce and politeness was otherwise compatible with the humanist inheritance of Hellenistic and biblical chronology.

[41] Carte, 1747, pp. 372, 375.

A sharper tension is that between Goguet's insistence that agriculture and civilisation must be urban and kingly in character, and could therefore develop only from Semitic and Hamitic origins, and Carte's willingness to allow the Greek gods, as Titan kings and sons of Japhet, an autonomous role in the civilising of Japhetic and gentile mankind. The gentiles were the descendants of Japhet, and because their unit of social organisation was the clan, their history was that of barbarism; but barbarism thus acquired a dynamic of its own. There are some rather fundamental cleavages here in western historical thought. On the one hand, a gentile reading of history must leave the twelve tribes of Israel *gentes* like any other, but with a sacred history that severed them utterly from all the biblical Gentiles. On another, Goguet could not imagine that Greek civilisation had any but Phoenician and Egyptian origins; he could not imagine gentile barbarians effecting their own transition to agriculture, and founding the polis of hoplite citizens in the process. Carte was nearer to Smith, who could imagine such a process; his Celtic gentiles pass from nomadism to agriculture by way of conquest and settlement, and though what they found is the allodial kingdom rather than the polis, the synoecisms of *gentes* carried out by Theseus and Romulus are foundations not so very different. The polis and the *feudum* (we may add the covenant) are ambivalently related in western historiography; though antithetical to one another, they are equidistant from Nineveh, Memphis and the paradigm of oriental despotism. They are the work of free gentile barbarians, the sword in one hand, the ploughshare in the other, and the law in their mouths. If Goguet ranks with those who cannot allow the Japhetic barbarians any historic initiative of their own, Carte is nearer to those who relegate Hamite and Semite city-dwellers to oriental servility, and monopolise history in the hands of the fierce giants of the north. We have not written these gigantomachies out of historiography yet.

CHAPTER 5

The forest Germans: lethargy and passion in a transhumant culture

> [W]e may safely pronounce that without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.[1]

The long detour we have made through Japhetic history returns us to Gibbon at the moment of pronouncing this sternly anti-Ossianic judgement, in which he refuses to follow Carte in conceding that oral mnemonic, in a bardic culture, is capable of doing the work of the historian, the legislator, or the facilitator of commerce. In the first volume of the *Decline and Fall*, it occurs in the ninth chapter, in which Gibbon seems to follow Tacitus closely while in fact transposing the text of *De Moribus Germanorum* into the key of eighteenth-century philosophic history,[2] and presenting the peoples of the trans-Rhenane and trans-Elbian woodlands as 'savages', lacking both money and letters, gold and paper,[3] and rendered capable by the possession of iron only of penetrating and renewing decadent civilisations, undergoing civilisation themselves in the process, but never of creating a civilisation of themselves. It is a thought loaded with gender; the fierce giants of the north are at once enormously virile and erotically passive, and the *fortuna* of Rome will take their *virtus* captive in the moment of being subjected and fertilised by it. We have now to examine Gibbon *de moribus Germanorum* to see how he combines masculine and feminine stereotypes in his account of peoples not yet capable of possession or transaction; the study of savagery is never far removed from that of effeminacy.

The Germans were savages, not merely because they dwelt in the forests or *silvae*, in scattered habitations and cities which were only fortified camps

[1] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 235.
[2] There is an analysis of Gibbon's modifications of Tacitus's text in Womersley, 1988, pp. 84–8.
[3] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 234–7.

or stockades, but for the more basic reason that they were hunters and herdsmen.

> The game of various sorts with which the forests of Germany were plentifully stocked supplied its inhabitants with food and exercise. Their monstrous herds of cattle, less remarkable indeed for their beauty than for their utility, formed the principal object of their wealth. A small quantity of corn was the only produce exacted from the earth: the use of orchards or artificial meadows was unknown to the Germans; nor can we expect any improvements in agriculture from a people whose property every year experienced a general change by a new division of the arable lands, and who, in that strange operation, avoided disputes by suffering a great part of their territory to lie waste and without tillage.[4]

Gibbon at Buriton may have accounted himself an improving, but not an enclosing landlord. We may not need the dimension of his personal experience in order to point out that western historical philosophy in the eighteenth century was the epic of arable tillage leading to agrarian capitalism, and that the Germans are here being presented as a people whose swords are not yet beaten into ploughshares and who consequently neither labour, appropriate, nor produce. Hunting feral mammals and herding domesticated, they change their habitations every year and to that extent are still in the condition of man as a vagrant species, but there is a degree of social regulation; in order to avoid disputes, some kind of magistracy reapportions the land every year. We are in something like a Lockean state of nature, but what is less Lockean is the degree of emphasis on the difference between pasture and tillage. This would not be unknown to Locke, but Gibbon does not cite him; rather, in mentioning the degree of urbanisation in modern Germany (although 'the straggling villages of Silesia are several miles in length'[5]), he quotes Cornelius de Pauw's *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Américains* and comments on the author's German birth.[6] It is an indication of how far the identification between ancient and modern 'savagery' has come since Locke's Indian hunter and Swiss pedlar met in the forests of America.[7]

Goguet had emphasised that only with the advent of sedentary agriculture did it become possible for humans to exchange ideas and construct laws and religions. Gibbon, a generation later, is concerned with the history of the passions. Immediately after explaining that money and letters, 'by giving more active energy to the powers and passions of human nature' – a phrase which recalls Ferguson – 'have contributed to multiply the objects

[4] Womersley, 1994, I, p. 236. [5] Ibid. n. 22.
[6] Ibid. p. 235, n. 17. He was in fact Dutch. See further below, pp. 175–6, 178.
[7] Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 14 (Laslett, 1988, p. 277).

they were designed to represent',[8] he proceeds to consider what happens to the passions and their energies when money and letters do not yet exist. His language may well remind us of Robertson's account of the psychology of American Indians, which was not published till two years later.

> If we contemplate a savage nation in any part of the globe, a supine indolence and a carelessness of futurity will be found to constitute their general character. In a civilised state every faculty of man is expanded and exercised; and the great chain of mutual dependence connects and embraces the several members of society. The most numerous portion of it is employed in constant and useful labour. The select few, placed by fortune above that necessity, can however, fill up their time by the pursuits of interest or glory, by the improvement of their estate or of their understanding, by the duties, the pleasures, and even the follies, of social life.[9]

Gibbon had divided his time, since his father died, between the pursuits of gentleman farmer, gentleman scholar, member of parliament and polite (but bachelor) clubman. He continues:

> The Germans were not possessed of these varied resources. The care of the house and family, the management of land and cattle, were delegated to the old and the infirm, to women and slaves. The lazy warrior, destitute of every art that might employ his leisure hours, consumed his days and nights in the animal gratifications of sleep and food. And yet by a wonderful diversity of nature (according to the remark of a writer who had pierced into its darkest recesses), the same barbarians are by turns the most indolent and the most restless of mankind. They delight in sloth, they detest tranquillity.[10] The languid soul, oppressed with its own weight, anxiously required some new and powerful sensation; and war and danger were the only amusements adequate to its fierce temper. The sound that summoned the German to arms was grateful to his ear. It roused him from his uncomfortable lethargy, gave him an active pursuit, and, by strong exercise of the body, and violent emotions of the mind, restored him to a more lively sense of his own existence. In the dull intervals of peace these barbarians were immoderately addicted to deep gaming and excessive drinking; both of which, by different means, the one by inflaming their passions, the other by extinguishing their reason, alike relieved them from the pain of thinking.[11]

Alcoholism and compulsive gambling are often identified as social evils common among Native Americans and other peoples similarly placed, but are usually explained as produced by the maladjustments of a detribalised culture. It is significant and rather ominous that Gibbon is treating them as phenomena of the tribal way of life itself. There had been times in his own life when he had drunk and gambled too much,[12] but there is not much sign

[8] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 237. [9] Ibid.
[10] Tacitus, *De Moribus Germanorum*, 15. [11] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 237–8.
[12] YEG, pp. 60–3, 161, 169, 174, 180, 191, 243, 286–7.

of addicted behaviour on these occasions, nor was the fear of addiction as prevalent in his day as it is in ours. In this passage he is explaining gambling and drinking exactly as he explains the more historically significant activity of war, as releases of human energy not otherwise employed; and he is saying that the only ways of employing this energy are productive labour and the leisurely consumption of the culture which labour produces. Lacking these outlets, the warriors suffer from *angst*. They are lazy because their energies are not employed (a vice versa may be detected here), and the energies of the mind turn to self-doubt; from which they are released by war, which assures them that they do exist, or by addictive pursuits which allow them to forget that they do. 'The pain of thinking' is more than a joke about barbarian thick-headedness. The energies are not converted into objects or ideas, and the passions become self-destructive. There is an anticipation here of Burke's identification, twenty years later, of Jacobinism as the energies of the mind released from all the restraints of property;[13] a new barbarism coming after the edifice of civilisation as the barbarism of the forests had come before it. Gibbon is concerned with savagery, not decadence; with war and drunkenness rather than ideology and terror. He is trying to identify barbarism as a condition of material life of which these addictions are the expression, and Valhalla – mentioned a few pages later as a paradise in which heroes fallen in battle are gloriously drunk for ever[14] – the projection into fantasy.

Because the Germans do not cultivate the soil, they do not labour and are therefore lazy. It is a further consequence that they do not appropriate or demarcate, and have therefore no understanding of law, which consists of the identification and adjudication of property: of *suum cuique*. They may produce moral codes which are altogether binding on the individual, but because they lack a sense of property, they are without the power to arrive at and accept decisions, without prudence, forethought or a linear sense of time and its consequences. Their decisions for war and peace – nearly the only decisions they do take – are therefore reckless and ill-considered, but there is a social ethic of a kind discernible behind their behaviour.

> The comparative view of the powers of the magistrates, in two remarkable instances, is alone sufficient to represent the whole system of German manners. The disposal of the landed property within their district was absolutely vested in their hands, and they distributed it every year according to a new division. At the same time they were not authorized to punish with death, to imprison, or even to

[13] Burke, *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 1796–7; see Canavan, 1999, p. 183.
[14] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 246.

strike a private citizen. A people thus jealous of their persons, and careless of their possessions, must have been totally destitute of industry and the arts, but animated with a high sense of honour and independence.[15]

There is some kind of distribution going on here, though it is not clear whether what is being apportioned is the right to some sort of primitive tillage, or grazing rights for the monstrous herds of cattle. At all events, the individual is not mixing his labour with the land to the point where he becomes proprietor of either the soil or its yield; and he does not acquire a socialised self, linked in relations with others through sedentary occupation and the exchange of messages and goods. He cannot incur the biblical curse on him that removeth his neighbour's landmark, for he has no landmarks and consequently no neighbours; only pre-social atoms moving like him through the free fall of transhumant vagrancy. Since he owns nothing but his self, he is conscious only of that self and not of its obligations to others; 'the Germans respected only those duties which they imposed on themselves'.[16] This produces 'a high sense of honour and independence', but that too can be illusory; it is based on passions so far from being disciplined that they flare up in pride and die down in lethargy, and the unlimited assertion of self can co-exist with its unlimited denial.

The desperate gamester, who staked his person and liberty on a last throw of the dice, patiently submitted to the decision of fortune, and suffered himself to be bound, chastised, and sold into slavery, by his weaker but more lucky antagonist.

This is to discharge 'debts of honour (for in that light they have transmitted to us those of play) . . . with the most romantic fidelity'.[17] Gibbon knew by personal experience what this obligation of honour could be like,[18] and he knew that it was founded on a sense of self ultimately false. The primitive honour of the barbarians had a long way to go before it could become that *honneur* which was the *principe des monarchies*; it would have to be disciplined by loyalty to a king who was a lawgiver as well as a chief in battle. Gibbon will not have it that the feudal ethos was a mere continuation of that of the barbarian war-band.

The honourable gifts, bestowed by the chief on his brave companions, have been supposed, by an ingenious writer,[19] to contain the first rudiments of the fiefs, distributed after the conquest of the Roman provinces, by the barbarian lords

[15] Ibid. 1, p. 242. [16] Ibid. [17] Ibid. p. 238. [18] *Letters*, 1, pp. 4–8.

[19] 'The brilliant imagination of Montesquieu is corrected, however, by the dry cold reason of the Abbé Mably' (Womersley, 1, p. 238, n. 54). Gibbon disliked Mably personally, and this move from the Germanism of the *thèse nobiliaire* to the Romanism of Mably's pre-revolutionary reading should be noted.

among their vassals, with a similar duty of homage and military service. These conditions are, however, very repugnant to the maxims of the ancient Germans, who delighted in mutual presents, but without either imposing or accepting the weight of obligation.[20]

We might insist that the chief was 'obliged' to bestow gifts on his companions and they to fall beside him in battle; but these imperatives are imposed by honour and shame, and Gibbon must be using 'obligation' in a specifically legal sense. He knew that the feudal structure had been a structure of law, and therefore of property; and on the assumption that property did not exist among the forest savages, the law of feudal society must – as far as we can read him at this moment – have been Roman in origin. That the pre-legal ethos of honour persisted in modern Europe in its least attractive forms – gambling and duelling – indicated that civilisation was founded on the education of barbarians; but the stress that the barbarian sense of self created 'a high sense of honour and independence', 'and even . . . all the virtues of which barbarians are susceptible – the faith and valour, the hospitality and the courtesy, so conspicuous long afterwards in the ages of chivalry',[21] furnishes an indication that the primitive self remained a necessary component of what it was to become when civilised. Europe had been created through the civilising of the forest barbarians; but liberty could not be established through civilising anybody else. There was to be a differentiation, later in the *Decline and Fall*, between western Europe, created through interaction with the forests, and eastern Europe, created through interaction with the steppe. In much of this Gibbon had been anticipated by Robertson's *View of the Progress of Society*, which had depicted the Latinised barbarians being civilised by law, chivalry and clerical learning;[22] and both anticipate Burke's later discovery that chivalric honour and Christian piety are necessary to polite Europe, and that the revolutionary assault on the past entails a subversion of the present.[23] However, Gibbon does not in this chapter take up the question of the Christian contribution to the progress of civilisation; on the contrary, his account of the barbarians, and their sense of self not founded in property, anticipates in a number of ways his much later account of the monks.[24]

A warlike nation like the Germans, without either cities, letters, arts, or money, found some compensation for this savage state in the enjoyment of liberty. Their poverty secured their freedom, since our desires and our possessions are the strongest fetters of despotism. 'Among the Suiones (says Tacitus) riches are held

[20] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 243. [21] Ibid. pp. 242, 243. [22] NCG, pp. 281–4.
[23] Pocock, 1987, pp. 67–70. [24] DF, III, ch. 37.

in honour. They are *therefore*[25] subject to an absolute monarch, who instead of intrusting his people with the free use of arms, as is practised in the rest of Germany, commits them to the safe custody, not of a citizen, or even of a freeman, but of a slave. The neighbours of the Suiones, the Sitones, are sunk even below servitude; they obey a woman.' In the mention of these exceptions, the great historian sufficiently acknowledges the general theory of government.[26]

This presentation of Tacitus in the guise of an eighteenth-century Scottish professor conveys Gibbon's awareness that property entails alternatives of free government under law and despotic government above it. But he is at a loss (he says) to understand how the trappings of despotism – luxury, absolute monarchy, slavery, a disarmed people, and female rule – could have established themselves among people to whom property was unknown, and is inclined to 'suspect that superstition was the parent of despotism', some temple of priests imposing the cult of Odin having established itself among the tribes[27] and Odin himself having played the role of Zoroaster[28] and faced the dilemmas of the prophet-lawgiver as outlined by Anquetil. For despotism to have existed among pre-agricultural barbarians, or for peoples in the same state to have 'acknowledged the authority of kings, though without relinquishing the rights of men',[29] we must establish some very special conditions, and in the former case at least some mutation of the heroic personality which must either assert or abnegate its independence, without the discipline imposed by social order. Gibbon does not offer an explanation of what he terms Tacitus's 'exceptions'.

We must be careful in assessing the allusion to the Sitones. Gibbon, who admired Catherine of Russia and was shortly to write a long study of Zenobia of Palmyra, did not think it necessarily servile to accept female rule – though its existence among barbarians might indicate the growth of the kind of despotism which entailed intrigue behind the curtain. To his account of German culture based on a vehement but precarious sense of self and honour, he adds – as did many contemporary theorists of the stages of society[30] – an account of the condition of women in that culture, and takes up Tacitus's contrast between barbarian chastity and the sexual corruption

[25] Gibbon's italics. Womersley, 1988, p. 87 shows how this excerpt is constructed from separated sentences in Tacitus's text; perhaps a Lipsian practice.

[26] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 239–40. [27] Ibid. p. 240, n. 42.

[28] Actually Muhammad – see DF, 1, ch. 10 (Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 256–7); but the allusions to 'superstition' (ibid.) and to a doctrine of transmigration and rebirth (p. 249) seem to justify the comparison.

[29] Ibid. p. 240. There is another allusion to 'the rights of men' when Gibbon treats of the Bagaudae (FDF, p. 475).

[30] Moran, 1999.

supposed to prevail at Rome. He is inclined to accept this rhetoric as a good account of the facts, first because barbarian women were probably too poor, too fertile and too little concealed from the public eye –

> the German huts, open on every side to the eye of indiscretion or jealousy, were a better safeguard of conjugal fidelity than the walls, the bolts, and the eunuchs of a Persian haram[31]–

to have much opportunity for sexual licence, and second for the reason, 'of a more honourable nature', that in a culture founded on honour and the sense of self, women were treated as having an honour of their own, 'and the first honour of the sex has ever been that of chastity'. German women were therefore monogamous and shared in the barbaric virtues of the men. They were respected as counsellors, priestesses and viragoes; they went to war with their children – a German war being necessarily a *Volkerwänderung* – and were capable of mass suicide to make the men fight or to escape slavery themselves. But on this subject Gibbon had something complex and confusing to say.

> Although the progress of civilisation has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favourable to the virtue of chastity, whose most dangerous enemy is the softness of the mind. The refinements of life corrupt while they polish the intercourse of the sexes. The gross appetite of love becomes most dangerous, when it is elevated, or rather, indeed, disguised by sentimental passion. The elegance of dress, of motion, and of manners, gives a lustre to beauty, and inflames the senses through the imagination. Luxurious entertainments, midnight dances, and licentious spectacles present at once temptation and opportunity to female frailty. From such dangers the unpolished wives of the barbarians were secured by poverty, solitude and the painful cares of a domestic life.[32]

While there is much here of the tabby old bachelor Gibbon was to become, there is much also of a serious problem in eighteenth-century social theory. The 'rational voluptuary', once set up in opposition to the perversions of Elagabalus, begins to appear an Ovid[33] or Don Juan, not so far removed from Elagabalus as he had appeared. Civilisation progresses by softening and refining 'the fiercer passions', but 'the gross appetite' of sexuality, which could be considered the fiercest of the lot, becomes more dangerous in proportion as it is softened. In the polite society, 'dress',

[31] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 244. Spelling of 'harem' as in text. [32] Ibid. p. 243.

[33] For the rational voluptuary, FDF, p. 459; for Ovid, p. 244, n. 57. The mention of the theatre as a suitable environment for seduction recalls the famous controversies at Edinburgh and Geneva in 1757.

'motion' – meaning comportment – and 'manners' cause it to be focused on the images of women as well as on their bodies, and give both seducer and seduced the opportunity to exploit the culture and corrupt one another. The male seducer in particular may be at once as predatory as the savage and as corrupt as the modern – all the sexual monsters of the late Enlightened imagination are crowding at the edge of the page – but he is at once masculine and effeminate; the softening of his mind has reinforced the violence of his appetite, and the ascendancy of the image has turned it to a kind of sexual superstition. He is corrupted and feminised himself, and the culture of manners does not seem to be affording the woman much in the way of a corrective role. But it does not seem, either, that this predicament can very easily be avoided. After describing the tough and wild women of German culture, Gibbon goes on:

> Heroines of such a cast may claim our admiration; but they were most assuredly neither lovely nor very susceptible of love. Whilst they affected to emulate the stern virtues of *man*, they must have resigned that attractive softness in which principally consist the charm and weakness of *woman*. Conscious pride taught the German females to suppress every tender emotion that stood in competition with honour, and the first honour of the sex has ever been that of chastity. The sentiments and conduct of these high-spirited matrons may, at once, be considered as a cause, as an effect, and as a proof, of the general character of the nation. Female courage, however it may be raised by fanaticism, or confirmed by habit, can be only a faint and imperfect imitation of the manly valour that distinguishes the age or country in which it may be found.[34]

This, rather than the portrait of Zenobia, may have been the point at which Suzanne Necker, reading Gibbon's first volume, was moved to write to him that he did not understand women and represented all their virtues as artificial; certainly she provoked the reply that he had intended only to deny them the warrior virtue of courage.[35] The issue – still discussed as that of women in combat – was then as now symbolic of something else; in Gibbon's case it illustrates the peculiar character of the concept of 'softness'. Civilisation progresses by softening the passions, and women are indispensable to that process; a society in which they are not soft is barbaric, and in a civilised society they must not only be softening agents, but must be soft themselves. Yet this softness, indispensable to civilisation, is at the same time a danger to it; it corrupts women by rendering them seducible, and softens men by rendering them seducers. Civilisation is a

[34] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 244. Gibbon's italics.
[35] EGLH, pp. 83–6; FDF, p. 472; MW, 11, pp. 169–79.

none too stable balance between the hard and the soft virtues, and it is this which pushes Gibbon towards the extreme case of the woman as warrior. Women can only be treated as equals when they are not what civilisation requires them to become; they can only become that at the risk that they will behave as by civilised standards they should not. The notion of women as refining and softening agents – which has not altogether disappeared from modern feminism – collides with the notion that civilisation entails the deconstruction and reconstitution of an original virtue and unity of personality which it is hard to describe in gender-neutral terms, but equally hard to give up.

A similar problem arises when Gibbon considers the matter of bardic poetry. If it was not capable, as Carte and Macpherson had asserted but Hume and Gibbon denied, of serving to transmit laws and preserve memory, nothing was left for it but to act directly upon the passions of the mind, which in barbaric society meant stirring up the lethargic warrior to assert his existence in arms. There had been bards in all northern barbaric societies, as well as in heroic Greece.[36]

> That singular order of men has most deservedly attracted the notice of all who have attempted to investigate the antiquities of the Celts, the Scandinavians, and the Germans. Their genius and character, as well as the reverence paid to that important office, have been sufficiently illustrated. But we cannot so easily express, or even conceive, the enthusiasm of arms and glory which they kindled in the breast of their audience. Among a polished people, a taste for poetry is rather an amusement of the fancy than a passion of the soul. And yet, when in calm retirement we peruse the combats described by Homer or Tasso, we are insensibly seduced by the fiction, and feel a momentary glow of martial ardour. But how faint, how cold is the sensation which a peaceful mind can receive from solitary study! It was in the hour of battle, or in the feast of victory, that the bards celebrated the glory of heroes of ancient days, the ancestors of those warlike chieftains who listened with transport to their artless but animated strains. The view of arms and of danger heightened the effect of the military song; and the passions which it tended to excite, the desire of fame and the contempt of death, were the habitual sentiments of a German mind.[37]

The primitive self, made up of few but strong passions and oscillating between lethargy and activity, responds immediately to the imaginative stimulus of repetitive song, by means of which the bards (*gens irritabile vatum*) recall it to a heightened sense of its own existence. In a society so little productive, there are few of the manufactured objects which attract

[36] For the Greek case, see Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 247, n. 71.
[37] Ibid. pp. 246–7.

superstition; the shrines lack temples[38] and the idols are hidden from view; and though there may be an order of druid-like priests who practise the usual deceptions and in some cases teach a vague doctrine of metempsychosis,[39] the promise of immortality is more effectively offered by the bards. It is a primitive kind of civic religion, since it encourages the warrior to emulate the deeds of his ancestors and be remembered in song as they are, as well as feasting for ever in the paradise of heroes; but it is a religion of enthusiasm, since it incites the self to be carried beyond itself in the immediate transports of passion;[40] such a religion as flourishes where awareness of self is not converted into awareness of others through the mediatory relationships of property and society. Among the civilised and polished, the passions are refined, and there is an awareness of the consequences of one's actions, the need for prudence and the critical contemplation of the passions; but something is lost as well as gained among these calm, cold and amused people. They become aware of the historical distance separating them from the barbarians and their epics, a distance which they cannot cross; Gibbon himself telescopes Homer, who lived in a bardic society, with Tasso, who did not; but he anticipates Ferguson on the ancient Romans[41] when he says that the aesthetic experience of the barbarians is such as to render them incomprehensible to the modern mind – and, we may add, to render the modern aware of this historical distance. But polite man has reason to mistrust his incapacity to share the immediate response of the warrior to the bard. When poetry lost its public meaning, 'a cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning'; 'the decline of genius was followed by the corruption of taste'; the Romans became a 'race of pygmies' and sank into 'the languid indifference of private life', until invaded and possessed by the fierce giants of the bardic culture.[42] The barbarians were to be feared, but so were the corruptions of civilisation. In the Roman case, what we see lost at this point was the epic and rhetoric of a civic culture, half way between the enthusiasm of the savage and the

[38] Ibid. p. 245. The forest shrines are assumed to be 'dark', and their 'secret gloom' produces 'horror'. That such holy places may be on high ground, among trees exposed to wind and sun, will be known to those who have visited the Great Shrine of Ise in Japan.

[39] Ibid. p. 246.

[40] The military tactics of the Germans are themselves those of enthusiasm: 'as the barbarians poured forth their whole souls on the first onset, they knew not how to rally or retire' (Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 248). The same used to be said of the pre-enlightened French; in attack they were more than lions, in retreat less than women. Compare the suicidal firmness of barbarian German women in defeat.

[41] FDF, p. 416. Voltaire had thought Tasso destined to eclipse Homer; NCG, p. 131.

[42] FDF, pp. 439–40.

frigid politeness of the modern, while exhibiting in the process of history some of the characteristics of each.

> Such was the situation and such were the manners of the ancient Germans. Their climate, their want of learning, of arts and of laws, their notions of honour, of gallantry, and of religion, their sense of freedom, impatience of peace, and thirst of enterprise, all contributed to form a people of military heroes. And yet we find that during more than two hundred and fifty years that elapsed from the defeat of Varus to the reign of Decius, these formidable barbarians made few considerable attempts, and not any material impression, on the luxurious and enslaved provinces of the empire. Their progress was checked by their want of arms and discipline, and their fury was diverted by the intestine divisions of ancient Germany.[43]

Once the decision had been taken to present the barbarians of the north as shepherds and savages, the existence among them of any kind of metallurgy was a problem, since this was one of the 'arts' supposed not to have been developed at those stages of social existence; Tubal son of Cain was no longer available as a culture hero. Gibbon steers a careful course between admitting that the Germans possessed iron for spearheads and armour, and insisting that they did not have enough – he never mentions steel – to make them truly formidable.[44] Since he also rejects the claim that the Germans attacked in vast numbers, he is reduced to ascribing their occasional successes to impetuous valour; a British reader might think of the history of the Highland charge, though the Germans are allowed nothing so well-tempered as the Highland broadsword. Impetuous valour was predictably succeeded by precipitate retreat, and the theme of barbarian indiscipline permits a confrontation with that of the gradual corruption of the Roman armies; Julius Civilis, a Romanised Batavian who had fought the legions with their own trained auxilaries, is introduced from Tacitus to suggest that the barbarians overcame Rome by infiltrating its armies.[45] Occasional assemblies of heroes were incapable of policy, and the Romans should have had nothing to fear from alliances or confederations of tribespeople. The exception will have to prove the rule.

> The general conspiracy which terrified the Romans under the reign of Marcus Antoninus comprehended almost all the nations of Germany, and even Sarmatia, from the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube. It is impossible for us to determine whether this hasty confederation was formed by necessity, by reason, or by passion; but we may rest assured, that the barbarians were neither allured by the indolence or provoked by the ambition of the Roman monarch. This dangerous invasion required all the firmness and vigilance of Marcus –

[43] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 247. [44] Ibid. pp. 247–8. [45] Ibid. 1, pp. 248–9.

though we must turn to Gibbon's footnote to discover that he 'was reduced to sell the rich furniture of the palace, and to enlist slaves and robbers',[46] and to modern scholars to be reminded that the war against the 'hasty confederation' lasted thirteen years.

> After a long and doubtful conflict, the spirit of the barbarians was subdued. The Quadi and the Marcomanni, who had taken the lead in the wars, were the most severely punished in its catastrophe . . . On the frequent rebellions of the Quadi and Marcomanni, the irritated emperor resolved to reduce their country into the form of a province. His designs were disappointed by death. This formidable league, however, the only one that appears in the first two centuries of the Imperial history, was entirely dissipated without leaving any trace behind in Germany.[47]

There is clearly something here that Gibbon is not quite able to explain about barbarian culture, its interaction with Roman, or the Romans' difficulty in maintaining the *limites* without expanding them further. The Marcomannic war, downplayed in his earlier chapter on the Antonine peace, is reintroduced here to serve as prelude to the next chapter, in which military anarchy coincides with Gothic invasions until both are resolved by the Illyrian soldier-emperors. In dealing with these phenomena, Gibbon relies on the established themes of internal corruption, and barbarian warfare as a species of *Volkerwänderung*. Whereas

> [m]odern nations are fixed and permanent societies, connected among themselves by laws and government, bound to their native soil by arts and agriculture,[48]

transhumant barbarians were formidable in war because – like ancient city states – they could put their whole manhood into the field, but at the same time were hordes rather than nations (though Gibbon calls them the latter) on the move; less tribes than confederacies of warrior kindreds – 'voluntary and fluctuating associations of soldiers, almost of savages' – who carried their women, children and cattle with them less because they were migrating to new homes than because they had none, and took new group names from their allies and leaders because they had little group identity. It was hard for the Romans to keep account of the barbarian confederacies that came against them, and the modern historian finds that the history of barbarism obliges him to modify the classical character of historiography itself.

> Wars and the administration of public affairs are the principal subjects of history; but the number of persons interested in these busy scenes is very different, according to the different conditions of mankind. In great monarchies millions of obedient

[46] Ibid. p. 250, n. 82. [47] Ibid. pp. 250–1. [48] Ibid. p. 251.

subjects pursue their useful occupations in peace and obscurity. The attention of the writer, as well as of the reader, is solely confined to a court, a capital, a regular army, and the districts which happen to be the occasional scene of military operations. But a state of freedom and barbarism, the season of civil commotions, or the situation of petty republics, raises almost every member of the community into action and consequently into notice. The irregular divisions and the restless motions of the people of Germany dazzle our imagination, and seem to multiply their numbers. The profuse enumeration of kings and warriors, or armies and nations, inclines us to forget that the same objects are continually repeated under a variety of appellations, and that the most splendid appellations have been frequently lavished on the most inconsiderable objects.[49]

Barbarism and civil liberty – whether in its primitive or in its political form – democratise and dramatise warfare and policy, which are the business of history, by involving whole populations in them; the historian is obliged to recognise the activity of those who would otherwise be involved in labour and the exchange of manners, subjects in which he would not be interested at all. At this moment Gibbon is at the other end of a spectrum separating classical history from the Enlightenment recognition that there must be a history of *moeurs*. He is characterising historiography as a neo-classical pursuit, which chronicles heroic and politic actions when these have been monopolised by a post-heroic but still honour-driven aristocracy, governing a polite society in which the masses have been excluded from heroic action by labour and social life. The history of manners may be the narrative of how society entered this neo-classical condition, or of how it passed out of it; and whether the history of religion obliges the historian to take notice of the activity of 'every member of the community' is a question which Gibbon has yet to consider. Meanwhile, the history of barbarism obliges him to examine 'inconsiderable objects' under 'splendid appellations'. Not only the numbers of the barbarians, but also their dignity, have been exaggerated by rhetorical distortion in an era of decline; heroic actions are really worth considering only when they are also civil and polite. The barbarians invade and subvert – though we know they may also renew – not only the territory and fabric of the Roman empire, but the manner of its history and the style of its historian. Gibbon is pursuing a movement out of the world of Tacitus and into that of Ammianus Marcellinus, where he will increasingly encounter actions – chiefly barbarian but also Roman – whose actions cannot be narrated, and whose mentalities cannot be comprehended, by

[49] Ibid. p. 252. The presence in n. 87 of Hume and the controversy over the populousness of ancient nations should be remarked. The passage quoted concludes chapter 9.

the rhetoric and insight of the classical historian. These problems call for a historiography in the manner of an *Essai sur les Moeurs*, or better still of an *Origin of Ranks*,[50] rather than a *Siècle de Louis XIV*.

In chapter 10, the narrative structure is renewed, and we begin to move through the succession of mainly Illyrian emperors from the fall of Philip the Arab to the victory of Constantine. But since Frankish and Gothic invasions, to say nothing of Persian wars, are recurrent in the story, there is need of a constant tension between Roman corruption and barbarian manners, and this complicates Gibbon's task by requiring him to write in two historiographic modes. We have already had to explore his treatment of this problem when examining the remainder of the first volume;[51] but his analysis of German culture in chapter 9 undergoes an immediate extension in the chapter which follows. No sooner, he tells us, had Decius established himself as the conqueror of Philip than

> he was summoned to the banks of the Danube by the invasion of the GOTHS. This is the first considerable occasion in which history mentions that great people, who afterwards broke the Roman power, sacked the Capitol, and reigned in Gaul, Spain and Italy. So memorable was the part which they acted in the subversion of the western empire that the name of GOTHS is frequently but improperly used as a general appellation of rude and warlike barbarism.[52]

Originating near the Alpine massif and flowing to the Black Sea, the Danube links two of Gibbon's Europes, the western and the Euxine, and here leads him from one perception of barbarism to another. The Germans studied in chapter 9 are Tacitean figures, viewed across the Alps and the Rhine as inhabitants of the Hercynian or Caledonian forest of central Europe; but the Goths come from further east, a herding and plains-dwelling culture who will in due course be forced across the Danube by pressure from the Huns, bringing into view a more specific image of pastoral society as shaped on the plains of central Asia. A wider and more oriental perspective is necessary, and Gibbon initially provides it by a critical account of the myth of Gothic origins afterwards shaped in Ostrogothic Italy in the civilised writings of Cassiodorus and Jordanes.

> These writers passed with the most artful conciseness over the misfortunes of the nation, celebrated its successful valour, and adorned the triumph with many Asiatic trophies that more properly belonged to the people of Scythia. On the faith

[50] John Millar's work of that name is not mentioned by Gibbon or studied in this volume.
[51] FDF, chs. 18, 19. [52] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 255.

of ancient songs, the uncertain, but the only, memorials of barbarians, they deduced the first origins of the Goths from the vast island, or peninsula, of Scandinavia.[53]

A literary legend of some antiquity depicted Scandinavia as the *officina* or *vagina gentium* from which swarming populations – in whom Gibbon did not believe – had issued to overthrow Rome and repopulate its provinces. It is one origin of Gibbon's 'fierce giants of the north', but 'the north' is an elastic concept, extended by Voltaire to all Scythia, Siberia and Eurasia; and once Gibbon has dislodged the Goths from Sweden and established them in Prussia (an event which he dates in the seventy years between the Antonines and Alexander Severus[54]), they and he enter a world of rivers flowing north to the Baltic and south to the Black and Caspian seas. He has therefore to associate the traditions linking them to the Norse world of Asgard and Upsala – the temple where 'animals of every species (without excepting the human) were sacrificed' to 'the god of war, the goddess of generation, and the god of thunder'[55] – with those derived from Renaissance scholarship, in which *Dani* were confounded with *Daci* and the north with the Scythian plains. He has recourse to the recently published Edda, which permits him to distinguish two persons under the name of Odin: the god of war just mentioned and 'the great legislator of Scandinavia . . . the Mahomet of the north', who 'instituted a religion proper to the climate and the people'. This heroic impostor escaped the dilemma of enthusiasm as described by Anquetil by a dramatised suicide in the manner of Lycurgus; he 'wounded himself in nine mortal places' and rejoined the war god in the paradise of heroes. But Gibbon is not entirely happy with this reading. Prophetic legislators did not quite fit into a culture where shepherds were nothing but savages, as his later portrait of the true Muhammad showed Gibbon to be well aware; and he throws strong and increasing doubt on a counter-story which presented Odin as an Azovian chieftain menaced by the arms of Pompey the Great, who had led his people to Sweden, there to multiply and meditate revenge on Rome.[56] Gibbon sees in this a myth whereby the Goths had remembered their Scandinavian origins after their migration through the great river-systems to the Euxine steppe and the Crimea; a migration no more momentous in its origins than the formation of any other confederacy of herdsmen, in the course of which they had 'probably acquired their iron by the commerce of amber'[57] – the problem of nomad metallurgy again – and

[53] Ibid. Gibbon had earlier (ibid. p. 231, n. 1) suggested that in ancient times the level of the Baltic had been higher and much of Scandinavia therefore an archipelago.
[54] Ibid. pp. 257–8. [55] Ibid. p. 256.
[56] For the whole question of Odin, see Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 256–7, and n. 12.
[57] Ibid. pp. 258–9, n. 20.

had come into contact with other Sarmatian and Scythian peoples much like themselves. Some of these were tent-dwellers and polygamists, fighting on horseback and speaking a Slavonic language, 'which has been diffused by conquest from the confines of Italy to the neighbourhood of Japan'.[58] Gibbon was regrouping what the previous generation of scholars had termed the sons of Japhet and in particular Magog, and his imagery was extending itself to take in the modern history of Central Europe and Russia. Nonetheless the Goths, ancestor figures of modern Europe, remain neatly isolated from their Slav neighbours on the plains and from the Persians south of the Caucasus.

> The Goths were now in possession of the Ukraine, a country of considerable extent and uncommon fertility, intersected with navigable rivers, which, from either side, discharge themselves into the Borysthenes; and interspersed with large and lofty forests of oaks. The plenty of game and fish, the innumerable beehives . . . forming, even in that rude age, a valuable branch of commerce, the size of the cattle, the temperature of the air, the aptness of the soil for every species of grain, and the luxuriancy of the vegetation, all displayed the liberality of Nature, and tempted the industry of man. But the Goths withstood all these temptations, and still adhered to a life of idleness, of poverty, and rapine

and yet of heroic virtue. A footnote adds:

> The modern face of the country is a just representation of the ancient, since, in the hands of the Cossacks, it still remains in a state of nature.[59]

Gibbon was relying upon a traveller earlier in the century; and it is hard to catch an echo of the appalling social war in the Ukraine in 1768, or the no less dreadful Pugachev rising of 1774, which might have suggested the *bellum omnium contra omnes.*[60] The 'state of nature', ancient or modern, was simply the state of savagery, even where the savagery was that of herdsmen rather than hunters; the state of any people not sedentary agriculturists. The Goths' use of swords and bucklers, and their obedience to hereditary kings,[61] raised them above the lowest Germanic level; but they still conformed to the stereotype of laziness and loot, lethargy and berserk enthusiasm. Their historians were bards or relied on bardic sources, and could not explain what had led them into the heartlands of civilised empire. This chapter, however, stands in contrast with a passage from Gibbon's Lausanne journal, recorded in October 1763:

[58] Ibid. p. 260. [59] Ibid., n. 28. The Borysthenes is the Dnieper.
[60] Venturi, 1979; Litchfield, 1989, ch. v.
[61] Womersley, 1994, I, p. 262.

On se forme une idée aussi fausse qu'elle est peu advantageuse des nations qui ont inondé l'Empire dans le V^me^ Siècle. On les regarde comme des sauvages sortis tout d'un coup des forets pour briser ces barieres qui les separoient du monde policé. Si l'on parloit seulement des nations Scandinaviennes, Scythiques et Arabes, je ne disconviendrais pas de la ressemblance du portrait. Mais les Arabes agissoient par enthousiasme, les Danois par vengeance et les Scythes par une ferocité naturelle à tous les peuples Nomades. Les Nations Germaniques, les Goths, les Vandales, les Francois etc. avoient beaucoup perdû de leur ancienne barbarie avant que d'entrer sur les terres de l'Empire l'epée à la main. Depuis plus d'un siecle des Corps nombreux de leurs compatriotes servoient dans les armées Romaines; ils etudioient la langue de cette nation, ils empruntoient les moeurs. Ils avoient adopté sa religion, ou du moins ils la reveroient. Ils avoient quelquefois du mepris pour les vaincûs, jamais de la haine. Le Soldat etoit quelquefois cruel, mais le General etoit rarement barbare et le Legislateur ne l'etoit jamais. Je passe rapidement sur des objets qui meriteroient d'etre approfondis.[62]

Sheffield's translation runs:

[Our notions are as false as unfavourable concerning the nations which over-ran the Roman empire in the fifth century. We look on them as savages just issued from the woods to break the boundaries which divided them from the civilised world. This opinion indeed may be applicable to the people of Scandinavia, to the Scythians, and the Arabs. The Arabs were actuated by enthusiasm; the Danes by vengeance; the Scythians by ferocity, common among wandering nations of shepherds. But the inhabitants of Germany, the Goths, the Vandals, and Franks, had devested [*sic*] themselves of much of their barbarism before they invaded the dominions of the Roman empire. For more than a century preceding that event, numerous bodies of their countrymen had served in the Roman armies. They learned the Latin language; they adopted civilised manners; and if they were not Christians, they at least revered Christianity. The contempt which they sometimes testified for the vanquished, was not mixed with hatred. The soldier was sometimes cruel, but the general was seldom barbarous, and the legislator never. I cast but a rapid glance on objects, which would deserve to be surveyed attentively.[63]]

Chapter 9 identifies the Germans as forest-dwelling savages, and the plains-dwelling Goths as barbarians very little better. Whether the *Decline and Fall* gives an account of this civilising process in the period (*c.* 230–378) between the settlement of the Goths in the Ukraine and the defeat of Valens at Adrianople must be questioned. If not, we must ask whether Gibbon had changed his mind ten or twelve years after 1763, or was yielding to the demands of expository rhetoric for a contrast in manners. It would be his final concession to the great exemplar of Tacitus's *De Moribus Germanorum*.

[62] *Journal B*, p. 83, EEG, p. 267. [63] MW, v, p. 363.

PART II

Joseph de Guignes and the discovery of Eurasia

CHAPTER 6

Gentile history in the further Asia

We are at a point of change and growth in the pre-Enlightened history of human society. Gibbon, we are sure, did not accept the history of mankind based on the genealogies of the sons of Noah; yet we have found – and will again find – him using, and interacting with, histories that did accept that scheme, without pausing to register mockery or complaint. The Noachic genealogies, furthermore, were not incompatible with fairly sophisticated schemes of the natural development of civil society; Grotian and Pufendorfian natural law, it might almost be said, served the function of supplying the Gentiles with a history – though further questions must arise when Gentiles were found to have recorded and narrated civil histories of their own. In reconciling natural and civil history with the Book of Genesis, a decisive step was the assignment to Gomer son of Japhet of the fatherhood of the agricultural peoples, and to his brother Magog that of the shepherds and nomads; for this made possible a biblically rooted account of the peopling of the western world by a medley of peoples belonging to the second and third of the classic four stages of society. Held in reserve, we should note, was the scheme early proposed by José de Acosta, permitting a settling of the New World by Noachic descendants still in the hunting or 'savage' condition.

A system of four stages has therefore emerged, but is not necessarily being applied with the schematic rigour we associate with Smith, Ferguson or John Millar. Gibbon we know was well acquainted with the first and second of these, and there are moments at which he pauses to acknowledge Smith as a master; yet we have found him relying equally on the work of Antoine-Yves Goguet, in which the four stages are demarcated into two, a vagrant and a sedentary, and the shepherd assigned to the first in a way which places him close to the savage. When we reach Gibbon's account of the pastoral peoples, we shall find him describing them as 'savage' in a way more suggestive of Goguet than of Smith's sharp distinctions between the

hunter-gatherer and the shepherd.[1] This point, however, is some way off, as it does not occur till the end of the second volume of the *Decline and Fall*, published in 1781. We have, on the other hand, observed Gibbon's suggestion that Germanic culture and its peoples originated in 'the gradual union of some wandering savages of the Hercynian woods'.[2] This points away from the Scottish thesis that Europe was settled from the start by Celtic or Scythian shepherds – sons of Magog – and towards Goguet's willingness to see the earliest Greeks as wandering Cyclopes, civilised by Egyptian or Phoenician emissaries from the urban civilisations of the river valleys. Gibbon has therefore a continuing foothold in an older scholarship.

We are to remember at this point that the four stages were in themselves ancient inventions, constructed by Greek and Roman speculators on the origins of human society, and by the authors of the biblical accounts of Abel and Cain and the sons of Noah, and giving rise to many origin stories told by ancient mythographers and by Christian and humanist scholars. It was the systematisation of the stages by jurists and philosophic historians that supplied the Enlightened version of the scheme, with which we are familiar.[3] The crucial step was taken by Smith, insisting that the shepherd stage was the move out of 'savage' prehistory into a dynamic history of creative development; Goguet foreshadows this step but does not take it, and we have found Gibbon adopting positions which are nearer to Goguet's than to Smith's. These will not, however, become problematic in our understanding of his work until he reaches the advent of the Huns, the first of the nomad peoples from central Asia to become actors in Roman history, and subsequently in European.[4]

Smith's redescription of the shepherd stage is not to be separated from a European discovery of steppe and nomad history as the *fons et origo*, or *vagina gentium*, from which a sequence of shepherd peoples – including the ancestors of no longer Cyclopean Greeks – had come to settle in the west. It is crucial to the structure of this volume that there coincidentally occurred a rediscovery of the 'savage', in the form of a multitude of 'indigenous' peoples with whom oceanic conquest brought Europeans into contact in the two Americas, Australia and many island societies. The effect of this was to widen the gap between 'shepherd' and 'savage', as Europeans focused upon the history of pastoralism and saw herding peoples as both their 'others' and

[1] Pocock, 1981, for an earlier account of this.
[2] Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 233; above, p. 20.
[3] Here we should be warned against the one false step made by Meek, 1976, the pioneer historian of the stadial scheme: that of taking the four stages narrative at its most highly developed, and looking for its first appearance in this form.
[4] DF, 11, ch. 26: 'Manners of the pastoral nations; progress of the Huns from China to Europe; flight of the Goths . . . ', Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 1023.

their ancestors; history became the narrative of how shepherds had been converted into settlers, a story in which 'savages' could find no place. We have next to consider the emergence of a history of central, upper, or trans-Caucasian Asia, to some degree exclusive of the urban civilisations further south, in which a succession of nomad and pastoral peoples acquired a civil history as well as a conjectural, and acted in a universal history from which they could not be excluded.

The discovery of Central Asia,[5] as a field of historical action of which historical narrative and enquiry were possible, is inseparable from the same discovery concerning the Chinese empire, which now demanded inclusion in the scheme of a still Christian history while unknown to Scripture and defying inclusion in the biblical and apocalyptic sequence of the Four Empires or Monarchies. The systematic study of its history was overwhelmingly the work of the Jesuit missions that had reached China early in the seventeenth century, and embarked upon massive programmes of cultural exchange, in which the learning of written Chinese and the transmission and translation of its texts and classics were included. The Jesuit scholars were of several nationalities – Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, German – but a predominant language used in both translation and original composition came to be French, and there occurred an accumulation of Chinese texts in the Bibliothèque du Roi, which as we saw in an earlier volume was of interest to *académiciens* like Nicolas Freret and *Encyclopédistes* like Jean d'Alembert,[6] as well as to clerical scholars whose orthodoxy exceeded theirs. There is a discovery of China going on in seventeenth and eighteenth-century European learning, only some aspects of which concern us here.

It is important that Jesuit activity in China coincided with the Manchu conquest and the replacement of the Ming by the Ch'ing dynasty. It was known that the Manchu were a non-Chinese if sinicised people from the eastern steppe – though the epithet 'Western Tartars' seems sometimes to be used to denote all nomad peoples west of the Great Wall – and that this was not the first time such nations had entered Chinese history and established dynasties there. The Mongols of Kubilai and Genghiz Khan were already known in European history, and behind them the Hsiung-nu, Khitan and other peoples began to appear in the histories the European scholars were constructing. Here was a new, perhaps a mirror-image history of empire and barbarians, with the difference that the history of the Han peoples displayed

[5] I use this term imprecisely. There is coming to be a distinction between 'Central Asia', denoting the oases and trading cities, and 'Middle Asia', denoting the grasslands I have chiefly in mind. My thanks to S. A. M. Adshead for pointing this out.

[6] EEG, pp. 161–8, 205–7.

no Decline and Fall, no cultural transformation so vast as the 'triumph of barbarism and religion', but instead the imperturbable reconstruction of Chinese society around its Confucian customs and institutions, which had either absorbed or expelled every barbarian invasion and would in time do the same to the Manchu. To a *philosophe* it was evident that the force absent from this parallelogram was a religion capable of subverting and transforming empire; but the first European historians of China were Christians, who wrote history differently.

From the lifetime of Matteo Ricci (1552–1610)[7] the Jesuit encounter was with official Confucianism, which they understood to be a religion, a philosophy and a code of manners, and endeavoured to reconcile with their Christianity. It was Jesuit practice to work with and through ruling structures, and here they developed so great a respect for the values of the literati that some of them adopted much of the Confucian lifestyle for themselves. To make it, even in principle, compatible with the beliefs they hoped to preach in either Ming or Ch'ing ruling circles was, however, no easy task, and they had to persuade themselves and their superiors, as well as their hosts, that this compatibility was possible. The central issue was that of theism. The Neo-Confucian philosophies dating from the thirteenth century all too readily appeared atheist, in the sense that the *li* and *ch'i* were impersonal principles, like the spirit and matter of some western cosmogonies, co-eternal and co-existing, without need of a creator and inherent in one another. They recalled the non-theist systems attributed to Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius, and by the end of the seventeenth century found a dangerous European counterpart in the atheist pantheism attributed to Spinoza.[8]

Ricci, and those who held with him, therefore set out to argue that the basic Confucian writings, the accepted classics of the Late Chou and Warring States periods, were capable of a theistic reading, and that the *Tien* translatable as 'Heaven' was capable of bearing the meanings of the word 'God'. In this he aimed to show that the ancient religion of China was one of that class of Gentile religions deducible from the Book of Genesis, in which dispersed post-diluvian and post-Babelic populations had retained their original knowledge of God, but allowed it to become corrupted by various superstitions until God had once more revealed himself, to Israel in the Covenant and the Law and to all mankind in the Gospels and the Incarnation. Ricci hoped to convince the Chinese that they already practised a worship of God the Father, to which that of the Son might be added

[7] Spence, 1985, for a study of his life extending beyond his writings.
[8] Ching and Oxtoby, 1992, esp. chs. I, III, IV, XI.

in due course. The cult of Heaven was an instance of the natural religion of mankind, in which Christians might see anticipations of later revealed truths, but to which deists, when they appeared, were suspected of seeking to reduce all religions, emptying them of revelation and sacred history. Ricci's reconstruction of the original classics was indeed very close to that of Voltaire, who merely rejected the Christian sequel Ricci intended to follow it;[9] it was Nicolas Freret, nearer to atheism than to deism, who perceived and exploited the potential Spinozism of Neo-Confucian philosophy. To Ricci this philosophy was an instance of the degeneration of an original gentile theism, not too remote from the degeneration into superstition which more frequently occurred. He found reason to believe that an infection by Buddhist principles might partly explain it; but the Jesuit desire to reach an accommodation with the Confucian elite was so strong that he and his followers screened out virtually all knowledge of the Buddhist and Taoist presences in Chinese history, relegating them to the role of 'bonzes', low-status monks and magicians who exploited popular superstition. This Jesuit Confuciophilia helped occasion the European vision of China as a unified and unchanging cultural system that knew no essential change or history.[10]

Ricci's synthesis did not pass unchallenged. Some of his fellow Jesuits,[11] and more of their Franciscan and Dominican competitors, found Confucian philosophy less congenial than he did, and queried his insistence that the classics were theistically free from Neo-Confucian monism; they adopted the missionary assumption that those among whom they laboured were sunk in heathenism, and that conversion must entail a complete rejection of the gentilism of their ancestors. There arose the famous Rites controversy,[12] which smouldered for a hundred years before it was determined that Chinese veneration of their ancestors entailed an idolatrous worship of false divinities (an accepted account of how superstition had originated). Voltaire thought it absurd that Christians should carry their doctrinal disputes to a culture where they were not known; but it is clear neither that Chinese officials did not have an understanding of what the Christians were saying, nor that the Christians did not have to arrive at their own understandings of Chinese religion. The K'ang-hsi emperor lost

[9] For Voltaire on Ricci, see NCG, pp. 98–102.

[10] For a bibliography of European knowledge of China through the late seventeenth century, see Ching and Oxtoby, 1992, p. xvi; for the eighteenth century, p. 16.

[11] In particular Niccolò Longobardi and Antoine de Sainte-Marie. For the former see Lundbaek, 1992, pp. 34–6; note the role of the Dominican Domingo Fernandes Navarrete. For Sainte-Marie (alias Antonio Caballero a Santa Maria) see Rosemont and Cook, 1977, pp. 12–13.

[12] NCG, pp. 97–102.

patience only when he understood that a permanent papal legacy was to be established at his court for the purpose of pronouncing on the religion of his subjects and its conformity to that defined by papal authority. [13] He ordained that only those missionaries might remain who would endorse Ricci's positions, and the decline of the enterprise began.

These matters figure in the present chapter only in so far as they helped shape an early-modern European construction of Chinese history and its place in sacred history. To debate whether ancient Chinese philosophy or religion had been a corrupt or an incorrupt instance of the natural religion of post-diluvian mankind was to assign the Chinese a place in the history of the human race after the Deluge and the Confusion of Tongues; an easier task in the continental and documented Old World than it was in the trans-oceanic and unfamiliar New. This remained the case whether one held with Ricci that the Five Classics displayed a not yet corrupted monotheism, or held with his opponents that they displayed its corruption by superstition or false philosophy; but to interpret the history of Gentile religion was to interpret the history of the Gentiles themselves. Chinese history might defy incorporation in the Danielic scheme of the Four Empires, but that did not preclude enquiry into its place in the genealogies of the sons of Noah, to which a history of religion, prophecy and even philosophy might be appended. There arose among the Jesuits of the China mission a group known as the 'Figurists', who suggested that the Chinese culture-hero Fu-hsi might be considered – along with Pythagoras, Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus and other sages of antiquity (the list sometimes included Odin) – one of a series of guises in which Noah, or possibly Shem, had appeared among the dispersed Gentiles to keep the memory of God and his moral law alive among them.[14]

It is plain from their language, that of Louis Lecomte in particular, that the Jesuits were engaged in extending to China the *prisca theologia* which can be traced back at least to Marsilio Ficino and the revival of Neo-Platonism in fifteenth-century Florence.[15] This attributed to the post-diluvian Gentiles something more than the common-sense monotheism and moralism we normally associate with the 'natural religion'. Being rooted in a concept of 'reason' more Platonist than Enlightened – Cambridge Platonists expounded it in post-Puritan England – it proposed that ideas worked in the mind without being its inventions, and therefore permitted the natural religion to entertain anticipations of truths, like those of the Incarnation and the Trinity, long before they were revealed. Proponents

[13] Rule, 1986, pp. 137–46.
[14] Rowbotham, 1992; Rule, 1986, ch. 4, pp. 150–82.
[15] D. Walker, 1972.

of the *prisca theologia* drew upon the deep fascination of the medieval, Renaissance and baroque intelligences with schemes of analogy, typology, numerology and cabbala, and permitted the ancient sages the use of these in expounding truths to the Gentiles. They did not, however, lose sight of the distinction between truths directly revealed to a chosen people and the same truths imperfectly intimated without a covenant, and Gentile religions were exposed, as all knew, to degeneration, corruption and idolatry. The esoteric systems in which the founders of Gentile religions had supposedly encoded and concealed their teachings came to be seen – as they had been by pre-Christian thinkers – as allied with systems of myth, polytheism and superstition, in which the founders had encoded as much truth as the incorrigibly superstitious masses could be made to accept by these means. Here we encounter the concept of priestcraft as freethinkers and deists were to develop it – esotericism for the few and idolatry for the many – and the truths encoded by the sages (who were now seen as mages as well) might be corrupted by the language in which they were concealed. It is important that we also encounter here the origins of philosophy, a term denoting thought largely Gentile; much of it was magian in origin and required either scriptural or rational correction. The *prisca theologia* was Neo-Platonist, but the Christian orthodoxy of Neo-Platonism was not always certain.

Recent scholarship has examined the *prisca theologia* as a phenomenon in the history of philosophy, theology and the concept of religion itself;[16] but it is also a phenomenon in that of historiography. As a Christian construct, it linked the history of belief systems with the Noachic genealogy and chronology; if Fu-hsi had been Shem, were the Chinese a people of Semitic descent? Here a particular importance belongs to the image or myth of Egypt, of all ancient civilisations known to west Eurasian scholarship the most venerable and – because its writings could not be read – the most mysterious. It was crucial that Hermes Trismegistus, an Egyptian figure, was at the centre of what proved to be the mythology of Neo-Platonism and that Ficino had laboured to edit his supposed works;[17] for in this way Egypt came to be seen as the homeland of esoteric or 'hermetic' wisdom connecting ancient Gentiles with God's sacred history. It was problematic, however, that Egyptians were generally thought to be descendants of Ham, Canaan and Nimrod, a *hereditas* not only *damnosa* but actually *damnata*; for the progeny of these accursed figures were unlikely candidates for the

[16] Harrison, 1990; Kelley, 2002, ch. 3, pp. 65–104. For the deist response see Manuel, 1959 and 1983.
[17] Harrison, 1990, pp. 12–13; D. Walker, 1972, *passim*. For Hermes in his ancient setting, see Fowden, 1986.

transmission of even encoded truths. The solution was found in supposing that the Hermetic theology was the form in which God's mercy had permitted the lowest of Noah's descendants to play their part in the ultimate salvation open to Gentiles, while the degeneration into idol-worship had reached its lowest form in the animal-headed figures which were supposed to represent the actual worship of beasts.

Egyptian hieroglyphs attracted passionate intellectual curiosity the longer they remained undeciphered, and there grew up a tradition of speculative enquiry into the supposed succession of pictogrammatic, ideogrammatic, phonetic and alphabetic systems of writing, in which baroque cryptography and mnemonic system-building went hand in hand with highly sophisticated philosophies of language and its natural history.[18] In those schemes the Chinese ideograms were often associated with the Egyptian hieroglyphs, and the hypothesis that the former developed from the latter persisted even when Chinese writing could be read and Egyptian could not. But it was difficult to separate the history of scripts from the history of nations; were the Chinese to be accounted an Egyptian, even a Hamitic people? This problem persisted to the end of the eighteenth century. Its significance for the present enquiry lies less in its role in the history of language philosophy than in its bearing on the construction of a Eurasian history in which both Chinese and steppe nomad peoples figured and the latter's impact was felt as far as Europe.

The shepherd peoples of Central Asia were of a distinct genealogy. In previous chapters we have followed the pastoral sons of Magog and the cultivator sons of Gomer into the Atlantic island extremities of the Old World, where the house of Japhet is the bearer of a stadial history in which shepherds and ploughmen colonise Europe, leaving the Americas to be settled by hunter-gatherers moving east. The settlement of Europe by shepherds is the beginning of the westward course of empire; but once the sons of Japhet are identified with Celts and Scythians, Japhetic history is obliged to begin on the steppe, leaving alluvial and urban history to the progeny of Japhet's brothers. The Goths who cross the Danube with the Huns on their heels are the most momentous, if not the last, of these westward migrations, and if it becomes a commonplace that the liberties of Europe are Gothic in origin, there is at least one text that informs the English that they are by origin a colony of Tartars.[19] But if the sons of Magog and Gomer regularly pursue

[18] Iversen, 1993.

[19] *A General History of the Turks, Mogols and Tatars* (London, 1730); cited in Marshall and Williams, 1982, pp. 88, 97 (n. 93).

a westward course, there emerges as the Chinese histories become known a counter-history of their interactions with Confucian civility. Perhaps the Chinese are an Egyptian, Semitic or Hamitic people, here interacting with the sons of Japhet; but this may be of less importance than the deep fascination the Jesuits felt with Confucian culture, the starting point of this narrative.

Christian Europe had its own history of encounters with nomad migrations and empires. Most recently there had been Timur or Tamerlane, who had almost overthrown the Ottoman Turks – themselves an Asian people, if no longer nomadic but Islamicised – and died on the way to the conquest of China, leaving his heirs to achieve the Mogul empire in India. Before him there had been Genghiz Khan, whose Mongol empire had threatened Europe while destroying the Abbasid caliphate and intervening in the last wars of the Crusades. His heirs led by Kubilai had established the Yuan dynasty in China, and it was therefore possible for Mongol history to be written on two fronts, European orientalists drawing on Persian sources and Jesuit scholars on Chinese; an important step towards the synthesising of a Eurasian perspective.[20] But histories written from a west Eurasian viewpoint must emerge through the prisms formed by European understandings of the Arab caliphate and the Ottoman monarchy, and these were empires ruled from palaces and likely to be incorporated in the ancient and protean paradigm of 'oriental despotism'.[21] As we saw in the case of Adam Ferguson and the review of his *Essay* in Gibbon's *Mémoires Littéraires*,[22] this commonly entailed the image of desert horsemen who could never become more than the palace's mercenaries, spahis and guards. In western Europe shepherds became ploughmen; but a different story must be told when Jesuit scholars began to furnish a Chinese history, in which waves of nomads moving east from the deserts interacted with Confucian civility.

Here the crucial role – even before biblically based history was replaced by philosophic – was played by the Jesuit recognition of the primacy of Confucian culture. The empires set up by Turks, Mongols and Timurids were viewed by western eyes in the mirror of orientalism; but it became a question whether the Chinese dynasties fitted the paradigm of 'oriental despotism'. Montesquieu had argued that they did;[23] but Jesuit narratives, adapted by deists and *philosophes* to their own purposes, advanced a structurally

[20] Minuti, 1994. [21] Richter, 1973; Venturi, 1972, pp. 41–51; Minuti, 1975.
[22] NCG, pp. 343–4, 348, 350–4.
[23] *Esprit des Lois*, VIII, XXI; XIX, XVII–XX; Cohler, Miller and Stone, 1989, pp. 116–17, 126–8, 317–21.

different picture. Despotism was classically defined by the absence of liberty, property and law, reducing the ruler to tyranny, his subjects to servility and both to degeneracy and effeminacy; but Jesuits and *philosophes* continued to present a picture of Confucian culture as ruled not indeed by laws, but by manners – a concept developed in a very different way by Gibbon in his opening chapters on Antonine culture. Confucius was held to have developed a code of deference, politeness and ritual, not only sacred but – here Taoism and Buddhism had to be disregarded – the only sacrality there was. Alone among legislators, thought the *philosophes*, he had evaded the trap of calling in gods and setting up priesthoods; but participants in the Rites controversy debated whether the veneration of ancestors amounted to the deification which Euhemerus had identified as a principal cause of the superstition into which Gentile religion degenerated. It remained a question, however – as it had for Gibbon at the outset of the *Decline and Fall* – whether manners could function in the absence of liberty and public virtue. The Confucian code might control the Son of Heaven and ensure that he never became a despot in the style of orientals further west; but if he and his subjects were both encased within a code they could neither change nor think of changing, it might be manners that exercised despotism – as Montesquieu argued – and exposed them as pygmies to the attacks of the fierce giants.

In the Chinese history shaped by Europeans, however, the despotism of manners ensured that there was no Decline and Fall, but instead the image of unchanging Cathay, the culture that persisted while dynasties and barbarians came and went. Desert horsemen now and then forced their way in, but were confronted by an unalterable culture and the choice between assimilation and extrusion. There was no moment of 'barbarism and religion', when they found the decay of virtue effecting a turn to the values of an unseen world. Enlightened culture, as we shall find, long remained deficient in any understanding of Buddhism, and there did not take shape any parallel to western history in which the Confucians played the Romans, the Stoics and Academics, and the Buddhists played the Christians. It was the paradoxical outcome of Ricci's attempt to make Confucianism pre-Christian that the Middle Kingdom came to possess history as philosophy, but no religious history at all.

Only the *I Ching* among the Confucian classics had suggested to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and his Jesuit sources a way of connecting ancient China with the Pythagorean mathematics and metaphysics which had been

essential to the *prisca theologia*.[24] After his time, a perception of Chinese civilisation as based exclusively on Confucian manners came to be part of the Enlightened programme of exiling Neo-Platonism and writing philosophical history rather than biblical; but this perception came to be static to the point of utopian. It was countered, if only in part, by the originally Jesuit enterprise of reading, translating and summarising the Confucian historical literature, from the *Book of History* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* down to the classic works of Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Ssu-ma Kuang (the former known to Gibbon).[25] This enterprise persisted from the baroque to the Enlightened; but its importance is that it supplied such European readers as there were with a history of China civil as well as natural, philosophic or conjectural; one in which the narratives of statecraft, the passions of men and the crooked timber of humanity could be read, and a dialectic between narrative, philosophy and erudition might have developed. It may be doubted whether this took shape; perhaps the post-orientalist myth of unchanging Confucian manners prevented it. But in the great age of Enlightened historiography the progress of the human mind was seen interacting with the changing states of society, themselves depicted in much detail. The question next to be explored is whether Jesuit and post-Jesuit scholarship was able to construct a history in which the unchanging customs of the possibly Hamitic Chinese interacted with the pastoral mobility of steppe peoples probably Japhetic and Gomerian. We have the case of a historian who set out to write such a history.

[24] Much has been written on this episode; for an overview, see Ching and Oxtoby, 1992, chs. VI and VIII, especially pp. 104–8.

[25] Rule, 1986, ch. 5, pp. 183–94; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1260.

CHAPTER 7

The many faces of Fo: the problem of religion in Eurasian history

(1)

As the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* took shape, above all in its post-Constantinean volumes, Joseph de Guignes (1721–1800) and his *Histoire Générale des Huns, des Turcs et des Mogols* (1756–8) took on a steadily increasing importance among Gibbon's resources. He spoke of it as a 'great history' and said de Guignes had 'laid open new and important scenes in the history of mankind'.[1] By this he meant his achievement in integrating Chinese dynastic history with the history of the steppe peoples, and the latter with the history of empires in the west of the continent, from the Hunnic impact which threw the Goths on Rome in the fourth century AD to the fall of Constantinople in 1453; de Guignes's history had a chronological sweep equal to Gibbon's own. Gibbon had a certain need for a scheme of Chinese history, and for this relied on Jesuit sources, mostly of the period when sinology was becoming independent of the debate over Chinese religion. He owned and used Jean-Baptiste du Halde's *Description de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (1735), Antoine Gaubil's edition of the *Histoire de la dynastie des Mongous* (1739), the Jesuit translation of Ssu-ma Kuang's history, and at least one work dating from earlier controversies, Louis Lecomte's *Mémoires sur la Chine* (1696). None of these, however, nor de Guignes's own work, come into play in Gibbon's writing until he is concerned with the Hun invasion and the Gothic migration in the calamitous year 375, and this does not appear in his text until chapter 26, published in 1781, when he gives an account of the manners of the pastoral peoples and begins to integrate them with philosophic stadial history. For the last, as we shall see, he was not much indebted to de Guignes; the latter's achievement was macronarrative in character, the integration of dynastic history with that of the steppe, and the 'new and important scenes' lay here.

[1] DF, 1, ch. 26, n. 10 (Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 1029); III, ch. 64, n. 18 (Womersley, 1994, III, p. 795).

De Guignes was an *académicien*, not a *philosophe*; Gibbon mentions him among his encounters in Paris in 1763, when he had been among the sponsors of Anquetil-Duperron's researches into the Zend-Avesta in India. We shall find that he operated within the Noachic scheme, and was attacked for it; but he is remote from the baroque speculations of the Figurists. He studied Chinese civil history from the editions and translations of the Jesuit sinologists; and his standing as a major scholar is based on his deliberate enterprise of combining these histories with those he read from Arab, Persian and Turkish sources. He learned to read both Arabic and Chinese, with what degree of expertise it is not for the present writer to say; but Gibbon was moved to bracket him with the much earlier Barthélemy d'Herbelot, whose *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697) had been at the foundation of his youthful studies,[2] as the two French scholars from whom Gibbon had learned most of what he knew of the history of Asia.[3] De Guignes therefore brought Chinese history into contact with western orientalism, and the importance of his doing so is less the degree to which the two modes of thought could be made to merge than that to which he was empowered to treat the history of Huns, Turks and Mongols in a double perspective, Chinese and in the end Islamic. He re-examined Chinese history as that of an interaction between Confucian empire and the barbarians to its west, and he developed the latter until the history of the steppe merged with that of the Ottomans, a people no longer nomadic but capable of great and settled empire. Gibbon was thus able to see the fall of Constantinople – early selected as 'the term of his labours' – in the perspectives supplied by both pastoral history and Chinese. The *Histoire Générale des Huns, des Turcs et des Mogols* plays a part in making the *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* a history of the world, or at least the Old World. This role is extended through the second to sixth of Gibbon's volumes, and we have not reached a point where we can begin to study it. In the present chapter we are concerned only with de Guignes's part in laying the foundations of the concept of barbarism as it was when Gibbon began to write.

(11)

De Guignes in his preface indicates what he thinks of his two principal groups of sources.

[2] EEG, pp. 29–30, 40. [3] DF, v, ch. 57, n. 41; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 541.

Peut être ne sera-t-on fâché que je fasse connaître ici en peu de mots le caractère de ces Historiens. En général, le Chinois écrit pour former le coeur, pour montrer les devoirs réciproques du Souverain et des Sujets, et pour inspirer l'amour de la patrie. L'Arabe ne paroît avoir d'autre but que de rapporter des faits; avec beaucoup de vivacité il languit et n'intéresse point; tous les deux sont secs. L'esprit de méthode qui regne chez les Chinois les porte à dépouiller l'Histoire de ses principaux ornemens. L'Empereur a la sienne, de même le Général d'armée, de même l'Homme des Lettres. Toutes ces parties, ainsi divisées, deviennent seches et ennuyeuses, au lieu qu'elles seroient agréables si elles étoient réunies. Mais le Chinois cherche à être utile, et non à plaire. Il ignore ces belles descriptions et ces épisodes intéressans, que nous voyons dans les Auteurs Grecs et Romains. Il écrit purement, s'exprime en peu de mots, et marque avec soin les tems. L'Arabe au contraire, ou n'est qu'un simple Chroniqueur, et rapporte avec assez de bonne foi chaque évenement à l'année, au mois et souvent au jour auquel il est arrivé, telles sont les Histoires générales: ou il prend le ton d'Orateur, deux pages alors suffisent à peine pour racconter ce qu'il pourroit renfermer dans quelques lignes: il ne s'attache qu'aux expressions pompeuses, aux figures les plus élevées, aux grandes phrases bien cadencées, et dont les chutes terminées uniformément puissent tenir lieu des points et faire distinguer le sens. Il s'abandonne à sa passion, et ne compose plus qu'une satyre ou un éloge, c'est sur-tout le défaut des Histoires particulieres. Ce style de panégyriste et de déclamateur est aussi celui de la plupart des Historiens Grecs de la Byzantine, et de ceux des Croisades, qui sont de plus ignorants, crédules et superstitieux. Le Chinois est véridique lorsqu'il ne parle que de sa Nation, partial lorsqu'il s'agit des Étrangers, qu'il méprise trop et qu'il ne connoit pas assez.[4]

[Perhaps it will not be tedious if I make known here in a few words the character of these historians. In general, the Chinese writes to form the heart, to set forth the mutual duties of the sovereign and his subjects, and to instil the love of the fatherland. The Arab seems to have no other purpose but to report facts; with much vivacity, he loses direction and ceases to interest. Both are dry. The methodical spirit which reigns among the Chinese leads them to strip history of its principal adornments. The Emperor has his history, likewise the army commander, and likewise the man of letters. These divided histories, set apart from one another, become arid and boring, whereas they would be interesting were they told together; but the Chinese seeks to be useful, not to give pleasure. He has nothing of those splendid descriptions and instructive episodes which we find in the authors of Greece and Rome. He writes austerely, expresses himself in few words, and is careful to mark the divisions of time. The Arab on the other hand is either no more than a chronicler, scrupulous in assigning each event to the year, the month and even the day of its occurrence, as is the rule with general histories; or he assumes the role of an orator, hardly content with two pages to recount what he could have told us in a few lines, and addicted to pompous expressions, elevated figures of speech, and elaborate cadences whose uniform closures must take the place of

[4] HHTM, 1, pp. xix–xx.

pauses and convey the sense of his prose. He abandons himself to his passions and gives us nothing but a satire or a eulogy; such is the besetting sin of his particular histories. This Byzantine style of panegyric and declamation is also that of most Greek historians, and of those of the Crusades, who are in addition ignorant, credulous and superstitious. The Chinese historian is reliable when writing of his own nation, biassed as regards foreigners, whom he despises too much and knows too little.][5]

De Guignes writes as a neo-classical westerner, who assumes that historians in other cultures should meet the standards of Greco-Roman antiquity. He is perplexed by the lack of a recognisable Chinese rhetoric, and inclined to regard the eloquent Arabs as rather panegyrists than moral or political teachers. The two historical literatures are those which it is to be his achievement to set in counterpoint; but there is a vast chronological, as well as cultural, discrepancy between them. The Chinese histories at least appear to go back to remote, fabulous and even Noachic antiquity, whereas his Arabic (in which we may include his Persian and Turkish) sources are virtually without exception Muslim, dating from at earliest the seventh century AD, and belonging to what a Christian must think of as modern history. This circumstance was to divide his history into two broadly conceived sequences, in one of which the steppe peoples were to interact primarily with dynastic China, whereas in the later their history was to be that of their encounter with Islam and largely of their absorption by that civilisation; while Chinese history continued to be that of Confucian stability. It is the former sequence with which this chapter is necessarily concerned.

De Guignes found perplexing the capacity of Confucian thought to derive complex moral and symbolic meanings from bare recitals of facts and collections of gnomic sayings. This became part of the problem presented by what he took to be the sources for the earliest history of China and its civilisation. He deals with the question when he writes of the Four Books that ranked beside the Five Classics in the Confucian canon; but in understanding what he has to say, and the structure of his work as a whole, it is important to note that the context in which the Four Books appear is not that of Chinese historiography in general, but the endeavours of a Hunnish prince to sinicise himself and his people.

Quoi que j'écrive l'Histoire d'un Prince Hun ou Tartare, il ne s'agit plus ici de ces Barbares qui habitoient dans les plaines de la Tartarie sous des tentes et au milieu de leurs troupeaux. Depuis que les Huns étoient venus demeurer dans la

[5] Trans. JGAP, as are all quotations in this chapter and the next.

partie Septentrionale de la Chine, les principaux de la Nation s'étoient policés. Ils aimerent les Sciences, les cultiverent, les apprirent à leurs enfants et imiterent en tout les Chinois à cet egard.

Lieou-yen donna tout le tems de sa jeunesse à l'étude et à la lecture de ces anciens livres si respectés des Chinois, c'est-à-dire des King ou livres canoniques qui contiennent les principes d'un bon gouvernement. Il méditoit sans cesse sur ces fameux ouvrages; c'est ainsi qu'il vit l'Y-king, le Chi-king, le Chou-king et le Tchun-tcieou.[6]

[Though I am writing the history of a Hun or Tartar prince, this is not a matter of those barbarians who dwelt in the plains of Tartary under their tents and in the midst of their herds. From the time when the Huns settled in the northern part of China, the chiefs of their nation adopted civility. They loved the chief branches of knowledge, studied them and taught them to their children, and in every way imitated the Chinese as their studies taught them.

Liu-yen devoted his youth to studying and reading the ancient books much venerated by the Chinese: namely the *Ching*, or canonical works that contained the principles of good government. He meditated incessantly on these famous writings, and in this way came to value the *I Ching*, the *Shih Ching*, the *Shu Ching* and the *Ch'un Ch'iu*.]

The interplay of barbarism and civility is de Guignes's guiding theme; but he is at the same time involved in the late Jesuit endeavour to understand Chinese ethics and history. In what he has to say of the Four Books, it is this rather than the history of the Huns which is uppermost. Beginning with the *I Ching*, he says it is

le monument le plus ancien qui se soit conservé parmi les Chinois et même parmi les hommes. L'Empereur Fo-hi, suivant tous les Historiens, en est l'Auteur . . . C'est véritablement un livre inintelligible, que la seule antiquité a rendu respectable, et qui l'est devenu davantage par les Commentaires que Ven-vam,[7] et ensuite Confucius, les Fondateurs de l'Ecole Philosophique des Chinois, y ont ajoutés, tirant des principes de morale, tant pour la Société que pour le Gouvernement, de l'accord et de la réunion de toutes ces lignes. Mais le plus grand usage que l'on fait de ce livre est la divination. Plus il est enveloppé de ténébres, et plus les Chinois y découvrent de connoissances. L'Y-king sert à tout; il est la source de toutes les Sciences, et on l'employe à prédire aux hommes ce qui doit leur arriver.[8]

[the most ancient document preserved among the Chinese and even among humans. The emperor Fu Hsi, according to all historians, was its author . . . It is in truth a book altogether unintelligible, which only antiquity has made venerable,

[6] HHTM, I p. 146.

[7] De Guignes (V, p. 355) says that Chinese sounds resembling French nasal terminations (*matin*, *sermon*) are written with an M by Portuguese transliterators and with NG by German. He has used both indifferently.

[8] HHTM, II, pp. 146–7.

aided by the commentaries added to it by Wen-wang and Confucius, the founders of the Chinese school of philosophy. They extracted principles of morality for society as well as government from the harmony and reunion of (the broken lines of the hexagrams). The chief use made of this book, however, is for divination. The more it is shrouded in darkness, the more meanings the Chinese discover in it. The *I Ching* serves every purpose; it is the source of all forms of knowledge, and is used to foretell what will befall men.]

We have travelled some distance from Leibniz, the Figurists and the *prisca theologia*. There is before us the subversive suggestion that the origins of all Chinese wisdom may lie in the sticks cast by shamans and soothsayers. Nevertheless, de Guignes is not a *philosophe*; if he is engaged here in the history of religion rather than barbarism, his scepticism is of Jesuit origin and is rooted in scholarship rather than deism. The minimal reading he is prepared to give the *I Ching* is the product of sinology: that is, of the decision by later Jesuits, such as Gaubil and du Halde, to dissolve the great disputes over Chinese atheism and idolatry into the philological enterprise of reading the texts and interpreting them clearly. So with the other books; the *Shih Ching* or *Book of Odes* is

un recueil de pièces de Poësies faites à la louange des grands hommes sous les trois premieres Dynasties Chinoises. Selon Confucius rien n'étoit plus propre que ce livre pour porter les hommes à la vertu et les instruire de leurs devoirs. On chantoit ces Odes dans toutes les cérémonies publiques, dans les Sacrifices, dans les Assembleés; car la Musique faisoit alors une partie considérable du Gouvernement et de la Religion. L'accord et l'harmonie des sons qui servoient à exprimer ces chansons portoient dans le coeur des peuples le même accord, et leur inspiroient la douceur les uns pour les autres, et le respect pour les Dieux.[9]

[a collection of poems made in praise of the great men of the first three Chinese dynasties. According to Confucius nothing is better fitted than this book to bring men to virtue and instruct them in their duties. These odes were sung in all public ceremonies, sacrifices and assemblies; for music was then an important part of both government and religion. The concord and harmony of sounds which gave these songs meaning brought the hearts of the people into the same unison and filled them with gentleness towards each other and respect for the gods.]

To a Christian there was nothing new about sacred and public music; but here there is a hint of texts which could be read only as they were sung. The *Shu Ching*,

encore plus instructif et plus utile par le détail des vertus et des vices des Empereurs de la Chine et de leurs Ministres, offre aux hommes et surtout aux Princes, des reflexions sur la conduite qu'ils doivent tenir avec leurs Sujets . . . Partout dans ces

[9] Ibid. II, pp. 146–7.

Ouvrages on trouve les maximes d'un sage Gouvernement . . . Le Tchun-tcieou, composé par Confucius lui-même, n'est qu'une chronique très-séche de l'Histoire de son pays et des Etats voisins; mais un Chinois accoutumé à refléchir trouve dans ce détail rapide des evénemens une source inépuisable de reflexions. D'un coup d'oeil il vit passer devant lui des siécles qui entraînent avec eux les Rois, les Conquérans, les Ministres et tous les Grands hommes dont il ne reste que le souvenir des bonnes ou des mauvaises actions.[10]

[far more instructive and useful in the detailed account it gives of the virtues and vices of Chinese emperors and ministers, offers to all men and especially to princes, lessons as to the conduct they should observe towards their subjects . . . Throughout this work we find the maxims of wise government . . . The *Spring and Autumn Annals*, composed by Confucius himself, is simply the barest chronicle of events in his native country and its neighbouring states; but a Chinese accustomed to think as he reads will find this rapid narrative an inexhaustible source of reflections. He will see pass before him at a glance the ages that bear along with them all the kings, conquerors, ministers and other great men, of whom there remains only the memory of their good or evil actions.]

If it is still a little hard to see how the appropriate moral lessons are drawn from the extremely laconic chronicles of these classics, there is nothing unfamiliar to a neo-classical eye about a history which is philosophy teaching by examples. What Gibbon would have found missing – perhaps de Guignes does too – is *arcana* alongside *exempla*, the mystery of how actions turn out and actors are impelled to perform them. So far, there is no Chinese Tacitus. Liu-yen the enlightened Hun studies the Four Books, but adds to them treatises on tactics and 'an infinity of writings by learned men who had lived during the Han dynasty'.[11] We are not told whether these included the writings of Ssu-ma Ch'ien the Grand Historian; but de Guignes is in search of the history in which Liu-yen lived as well as the history he studied.

This is to be the history of dynastic China, interacting with that of the nomad peoples who are the 'barbarians' of east Asian culture. Such a history begins when it begins to have historians, and these appear only when the *état* becomes to a certain degree *policé*. Before that date there are few reliable narratives, and we confront not merely the mists of antiquity, but the problems of sacred and biblical history. De Guignes was a biblicist, committed to proving that the Pentateuch enjoyed unique authority and that the histories or origin narratives of all other peoples conformed to the chronology of Moses. His critical account of Chinese traditions regarding history before the Chou dynasty is moved by this purpose, but also by his

[10] Ibid. II, pp. 147–8. [11] Ibid. II, p. 149.

intention of relating the history of the Huns and other peoples to that of the Chinese. Like most Christian historians, he has the advantage that the earliest writings of most ancient empires can be dated more or less within the accepted Christian chronology (though we do well to remember that the authority of Moses was not necessarily committed to that of Archbishop Ussher). As he developed his arguments, furthermore, we find him possessed of a Chinese civil history, based on the literature edited and translated by the Jesuit sinologists and requiring the modification of views which had obtained before it became available.

Les Chinois paroissent n'avoir été que médiocrement connus par les anciens Auteurs Grecs et Latins, au moins il nous en reste peu de traces: mais leurs Historiens nous fournissent eux-mêmes une suite de preuves, que cette nation n'a presque point cessé d'être en commerce avec les peuples d'Occident. Nous avons cru jusqu'à présent le contraire. Un autre préjugé nous a toujours trompés, c'est de regarder l'Empire Chinois comme un Empire qui a presque toujours joui de la paix, et comme le plus tranquille qu'il y ait eu dans le monde. Il est fort difficile de juger l'état de la Chine jusqu'au tems de la Dynastie des Tcheou. L'Histoire jusqu'à cette époque n'est, pour ainsi dire, que la liste des Empereurs, et n'offre que quelques événemens rangés selon leur année. Sous la Dynastie des Tcheou elle devient un peu plus détaillée, quoiqu'elle soit encore très-abbrégée. La différence que l'on doit mettre entre ces anciens monumens de la Chine et ceux que les Grecs nous ont conservés, c'est que les premiers ne nous ont transmis que la charpente de l'Histoire, c'est-à-dire, les dates chronologiques, de la maniere la plus exacte qu'il leur a été possible, et que les autres nous ont souvent donné des ornemens et des parties détachées, que nous ne pouvons remettre en ordre.

It would seem to be this disorder which has stimulated the European science of criticism. De Guignes continues:

Deux cens ans avant J.C. l'Histoire Chinoise devient intéressante, et c'est alors quel'on peut juger du sort de cet Empire. Cela forme à peu prés un espace de 1944 ans. On peut dire qu'il a été heureux et tranquille sous les Han pendant 400 ans à l'exception d'une vingtaine d'années pour la révolte de Vam-mam. Nous devons dire le contraire pour toutes les Dynasties suivantes, c'est-à-dire, qu'il a presque toujours été en guerre, et que les intervalles de paix ont été très-courts . . . En général, cette partie de l'Asie a été sujette à autant de révolutions que les autres contrées du monde.[12]

[The Chinese seem to have been but slightly known to ancient Greek and Latin authors; at least these have left few traces of them; but their own historians provide us with a series of proofs that this nation has scarcely ever ceased to be in commerce with western peoples. Until now we have believed the contrary. Another prejudice has always deceived us: that of supposing the Chinese empire one which has almost

[12] Ibid. 1, pp. 76–7.

always enjoyed peace and been the most tranquil that has ever been in the world. It is very difficult to form any judgement of the state of China previous to the Chou dynasty. History before that time is as it were a mere list of emperors, and mentions only a few events dated to their regnal years. Under the Chou it becomes a little more detailed, but remains extremely abbreviated. The difference we may mark between these ancient Chinese records and those left us by the Greeks is that the former give us only the scaffolding of history, that is dates and a chronology, whereas the latter often supply elaborations and digressions which we cannot arrange in order. Two hundred years before Christ, Chinese history becomes interesting and we can evaluate the outcome of this empire. It occupies a space of about 1944 years.[13] We may say in general that the empire enjoyed happiness and peace under the Han for about 400 years, except for about a score during the rebellion of Wang Mang. We must form a contrary judgement for all succeeding dynasties: namely, that they were almost always at war, and that the intervals of peace were very short . . . In general, this part of Asia has been subject to as much disorder and upheaval as other regions of the world.]

De Guignes has unveiled the two major preoccupations which will govern his rendition of Chinese recorded history: that there has always been commerce and contact with western nations – it would be premature to attribute to him any concept of 'the West' as we use the term – and that there have occurred in it as many domestic and foreign wars and revolutions as we find in the history of any other empire. Both theses require attention to the steppe peoples, their own history and their role in that of the Chinese. The former in particular entails a history of religions and requires us to revert to de Guignes's problems in sacred history: to the authority of Moses and the Fall of the Tower of Babel.

L'origine des Huns dont j'entreprens de donner l'Histoire va se perdre dans les siècles les plus reculés de l'Antiquité. Les seuls monumens Chinois nous laissent entrevoir de tems en tems quelques vestiges de cette nation barbare, qui servent à former une chaîne à la faveur de laquelle on remonte insensiblement jusques au tems voisins de la dispersion générale des Peuples. Au-delà du déluge universelle tout est inconnu aux Chinois, de même qu'aux nations qui sont les plus attachées à conserver leur Histoire. Moyse seul nous a rapporté en peu de mots la suite des générations qui ont précédé la déluge: et c'est une chose digne d'etre remarquée, que les Histoires de toutes les Nations s'arrêtent comme de concert vers les tems qui approchent de cette grande catastrophe. Envain l'orgueil des Egyptiens et des Chaldéens s'est efforcé de nous dérober la verité en lui substituant des fables et en comptant des milliers d'années: les recherches des Sçavans ont fait évanouir toutes ces vaines prétensions. L'Histoire des Chinois, ces peuples si anciens, ne contredit

[13] Apparently reckoned from the advent of the Han dynasty to the fall of the Ming in 1643. The Manchu or Ch'ing rule is implicitly set aside as a barbarian interlude, resembling that of the Mongols or Yuan.

point le récit de Moyse. Si nous remontons des siècles presens à ceux qui sont les plus voisins de leur origine; nous voyons d'abord une suite non interrompue de Monarques, une chronologie exacte dans la disposition des événemens; mais à mesure que nous nous éloignons de notre tems, l'Histoire de cette Nation devient moins certaine, et plus mêlée de fables: dans une époque plus reculée nous n'appercevons plus que les noms de quelques Monarques qui ont donné des loix à un peuple naissant, qui l'ont policé, qui ont inventé les arts les plus nécessaires, et qui ont enfin tiré du milieu des forêts des hommes barbares, pour les conduire dans les plains qu'il falloit défricher. C'est-là ce que nous pouvons appeller l'origine et le commencement d'une Nation; et lorsque l'histoire de tous les peuples semble s'arrêter vers une même epoque, et nous présenter les hommes qui ne se sont multipliés et qui n'ont été policés que dans la suite, c'est nous apprendre qu'il est arrivé alors une espéce de renouvellement du genre humain; c'est confirmer indirectement le récit de Moyse.[14]

[The origin of the Huns, whose history I have undertaken to give, vanishes into the most distant centuries of antiquity. Chinese records alone enable us to catch an occasional glimpse of this barbarous nation, which supplies the links by whose aid we mount gradually to the times closest to the general dispersal of the peoples. Beyond the universal flood all was unknown to the Chinese, as to all nations who have been careful to preserve their history. Moses alone tells us in few words the sequence of the generations before the Deluge, and it is a thing worthy of remark that the histories of all nations break off as if in concert as they approach the times nearest to that great catastrophe. In vain has the pride of the Egyptians and Chaldeans sought to hide the truth from us, substituting fables and reckoning in thousands of years; the researches of the learned have dissolved all these vain pretensions. The history of the Chinese, that ancient people, in no way contradicts the narrative of Moses. If we ascend from the present ages to those closest to their origin, we see in the first place an uninterrupted series of monarchs, and an exact chronology for the dating of events; but as we travel further from our own time, the history of this nation becomes less certain and fuller of fables. In the remotest age we perceive only the names of a few monarchs who have given laws to a people at its birth; who have civilised it, invented the most necessary arts, and enticed savages from the forest to lead them into the plains they must cultivate. Here is what we may call the origin and beginning of a nation; and when the histories of all peoples seem to stop at the same epoch, and present us with men who multiplied and were civilised only at a later date, it is to teach us that there then occurred a kind of renewal of the human race, and to confirm indirectly the narrative of Moses.]

The story of the Deluge is confirmed by the circumstance that no Gentile chronology seems to contain it, consisting instead of traditional legislators and culture-heroes; but the beginnings of a historical sociology are contained in the implicit reliance on a dispersal of the peoples, carrying with

[14] HHTM, II, pp. 1–9.

it a loss of arts and knowledge and their subsequent rediscovery. Savages – the original *selvaggi* – must be coaxed out of the woods and led forth to cultivate plains and grasslands; some of them will be arrested at the shepherd stage. There remains the question whether the dispersed peoples will lose the knowledge of God and if so how it may be renewed; but this sociology must be held together by a genealogy which is that of the sons of Noah and their progeny after Babel. A geography appears to reinforce it, and serves to distinguish Tartar history from Chinese.

Lorsque les premiers Colonies commencerent à quitter les plaines de Sennaar, il y a beaucoup d'apparence qu'une partie, après avoir peuplé la Perse et la Bactrie, s'avanca jusqu'à cette gorge formée par les montagnes qui sont situées près de l'endroit où l'on a bâti dans la suite la ville de Kachgar dans la petite Bukharie . . . Le chemin impratiquable qu'il falloit tenir à travers les montagnes de la Georgie et du détroit de Derbend, a empêché que ces Colonies ayent été suivies par une foule d'autres, et le petit nombre de celles qui s'y sont engagées y ont contracté une humeur féroce, caractere ordinaire de ceux qui vivent dans les montagnes. Ces peuples se sont moins appliqués que les autres à inventer ou à connoître les arts qui avoient été inventés, et ils ont eu moins d'occasion d'être policés par la fréquentation et l'arrivée des nouvelles Colonies. Ceux de la Chine, au contraire, où il étoit facile de pénétrer en suivant une route presque toujours fertile et unie, ont reçu plus souvent et plus facilement les arts inventés ou conservés par les peuples qui étoient restés aux environs de Babilone. Les Tartares, qui n'ont que de vastes pâturages, garderent dans leurs plaines leur ancienne maniere de vivre. Les Chinois qui trouverent par-tout des rivieres, des champs fertile en grains et en arbres fruitiers, s'adonnerent à l'agriculture, furent obligés d'arrêter par les digues l'impetuosité des rivieres, de creuser les canaux pour en disperser les eaux ou les distribuer plus avantageusement: ils cultiverent les sciences, d'abord les plus nécessaires, et passerent ensuite à celles qui ne sont que d'agrément, pendant que la Tartarie, qui ne fournissoit que des pâturages pour nourrir les troupeaux, força ses habitans à se borner à la vie champêtre et à n'être que des Pastres.[15]

[When the first colonies began to move from the plains of Shinar, there is reason to believe that one group, after peopling Persia and Bactria, made its way to that gorge formed by the mountains near the site where in after years was built the town of Kashgar in the Lesser Bukharia . . . The impracticable route through the mountains of Georgia and the pass of Derbend ensured that those colonies were not followed by many others, and the small number of those who settled there acquired the ferocious character common among mountaineers. These peoples were less given than others to the invention of arts or the knowledge of those invented elsewhere, and had less opportunity to be polished by encounter with others or the arrival of new colonies. Those who reached China, on the other hand, whither it was easy to travel by a route usually fertile and uninterrupted,

[15] Ibid. II, pp. 3–4.

more regularly and readily received the arts invented or preserved by those people who had remained in the regions round Babylon. The Tartars, having nothing but their enormous grasslands, retained on their steppe their ancient manner of life. The Chinese, finding all around them rivers, and fields fertile in grains and fruit-bearing trees, devoted themselves to agriculture, and were obliged to erect dikes to restrain the torrents of the streams, and dig canals to disperse the waters and distribute them more advantageously. They cultivated the sciences, first the most necessary and then the more agreeable, while Tartary, offering nothing but grasslands for the grazing of herds, compelled its inhabitants to live in the open and to be no more than shepherds.]

Within the Babelic scenario, de Guignes had distributed the peoples of northern Asia in the familiar pattern of herdsmen and cultivators – Machiavelli's *rozzi montanari* being left behind in the Caucasus and Chinese agriculture depending more on the digging of canals than on the ploughing of the soil. It remained only to integrate them with the Noachic genealogies, and later in his works de Guignes would decide that the Chinese were not direct arrivals from Shinar, but a colony of Egyptians. Here we find him turning, as Gibbon did, to the *Genealogical History of the Tartars* written by Abu'l Ghazi al Bahadur, a seventeenth-century Khan of Khwarezm, which had reached Europe through Swedish and Russian mediation[16] and was the source for Gibbon's remark that 'the wild Tartar' could trace his ancestry to Japhet. De Guignes combined the writings of Abu'l Ghazi with d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale*, and we read:

Après que Noé fut sorti de l'Arche, il partagea la terre à ses trois enfans. Kham fut envoyé dans les Indes, Sem eut l'Yran, c'est-à-dire les pays qui sont situés au Sud de la riviere Oxus, entre l'Inde et le golphe Persique. Japhet habita dans les pays de Kuttup Schamach: c'est ainsi que l'on appelle ces vastes contrées que l'on voit au Nord, au Nord-Ouest de la mer Caspienne, et au Nord-Est des Indes. Il campa aux environs des rivieres Etel ou de Volga et de Jäik. Après y avoir demeuré pendant deux cent cinquante ans, il mourut laissant huit fils qui sont Turk, Chars, Saklab, Russ, Maninach, Zurin, Camari et Taridge. Il choisit Turk, en qui'il avoit reconnu un esprit supèrieur, pour chef de toute la nation. Turk avoit reçu de son père le surnom de Japhet-Oglan, c'est-à-dire fils de Japhet: il inventa quantité des choses utiles, il fit des tentes, demeure ordinaire de ces peuples.[17]

[After Noah quitted the Ark, he divided the earth among his three sons. Ham was despatched to the Indies. Shem's share was Iran, that is the lands to the south of the Oxus, between India and the Persian Gulf. Japhet dwelt in the lands of Kuttup Schamach; the name given to those vast countries that lie to the north, north-west of the Caspian Sea and north-east of the Indies. He was encamped in

[16] Marshall and Williams, 1982, p. 90; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1187.
[17] HHTM, II, pp. 5–6.

the region of the rivers Etel (or Volga) and Jaik. Having lived there two hundred and fifty years he died, leaving eight sons: Turk, Chars, Saklab, Russ, Maninach, Zwin, Camari and Tarikh.[18] He chose Turk, in whom he had perceived the greater character, to be chief of all the nation. Turk received from his father the name of Japhet-Oglan, or son of Japhet; he invented many useful things including tents, the ordinary housing of these peoples.]

This is not the biblical genealogy used by Parsons and Carte, having clearly been invented to supply Central Asian peoples with eponymous ancestors; the wild Tartar used a different pedigree from the wild Irishman, and it does not include Gomer and Magog, those crucial figures in the prehistory of stadial theory. De Guignes had not needed the formal structure of such a theory to make the distinction between herdsmen and cultivators central to the distinction between barbarism and empire; it was embedded in the literature both ancient and medieval, and there was no need to explain that the steppe peoples were pastoral nomads. Yet to reintroduce Japhet was to integrate them in the biblically based sacred history to which de Guignes adhered, and to add Tartar history to the thesis of post-diluvian silence.

Telles sont en peu de mots les Traditions qu'un Historien Tartare nous a conservées touchant l'origine de sa Nation. Tout incertaine ou fabuleuse qu'elles puissent paroître, elles doivent être nécessairement placées à la tête de cette Histoire. Les Grecs, les Persans, les Chinois et quantité d'autres Peuples ont leur tems fabuleux, qui ont été suivis d'un second tems, où l'Histoire, quoique vraie, est encore obscure et pleine de difficultés. Ce n'est que dans une troisième que la verité historique commence à se manifester; je m'y arrête, et je n'ai plus d'autre garant, pour tout ce qui va suivre, que des monumens sûrs et de la derniere authenticité.[19]

[Such, in a few words, are the traditions which a Tartar historian has preserved for us touching the origin of his nations. Uncertain and fabulous though they may seem, they must of necessity be placed at the head of this history. The Greeks, the Romans, the Chinese, and many other peoples have their fabulous eras, followed by a second period in which history, though offering truths, is still obscure and full of difficulties. It is only in a third period that the truths of history begin to make themselves plain. Here I take my stand, and in all that follows I have no other warrant but sound documentation of the highest degree of authenticity.]

It seems to be at the advent of the Han historians that both Chinese and Tartar historiography reach the point marked for the Greeks by the Olympiad chronology. They have been securely lodged within the scheme of biblical sacred history, and the disciplines of classical civil history can

[18] I have not attempted to supply modern transliteration for these names. 'Tarikh' is a conjecture.
[19] HHTM, II, pp. 12–13.

now take over. But in western history, Latin and even Greek, the classical narrative was divided into history as well ecclesiastical as civil; the history of the church claimed to carry on the history of the actions of God. In Chinese and steppe history, as in that of the Indian, Persian and Arabic worlds to the west of them, there was no ecclesiastical history to be written; only that of religions deemed false, but for that very reason historically challenging. To this de Guignes turned his attention from the outset of his long and complex history.

(III)

L'an 65 la Religion de Fo est introduite à la Chine. Cette religion étoit établie dans la partie de l'Inde où est aujourd' hui le Mogol. Je pense que c'est le Christianisme (a).

(a) Dans un Mémoire que j'ai lû à l'Académie, j'ai fait voir que les Chinois donnoient à J.C. le nom de Fo. On n'eut alors qu'une idée confuse de la religion de Fo, et ce n'est que dans la suite qu'elle a été plus en vogue, et que l'on peut distinguer la religion de l'Inde d'avec le christianisme: mais c'est probablement de cette derniere dont l'Empereur avoit entender parler, et dont il eut connaissance par les Chrétiens qu'on lui amena de l'Inde, et non pas des Bonzes, comme on le prétend communement. Le christianisme a pénétré de très-bonne heure dans l'Inde, et c'est ordinairement par l'Inde que les Occidentaux alloient à la Chine.[20]

[In the year 65 AD the religion of Fo was introduced into China. This religion was established in the region of India now subject to the Mogul empire. I believe it to have been Christianity (a).

(a) In a Memoir which I read before the Academy, I showed that the Chinese gave the name of Fo to Jesus Christ. We had then only a confused idea of the religion of Fo, and it was only later that it became better known and we could distinguish between the religion of India and Christianity; but it was probably the latter of which the Emperor had heard some report, and he knew of it from Christians who came to him from India – not from the bonzes as is generally affirmed. Christianity reached India at a very early date, and it is usually by way of India that Westerners have travelled to China.]

The thesis here presented was of a somewhat obsessive importance to de Guignes; to us it exhibits a major crux in pre-Enlightened and Enlightened history of religion, and has much to tell us about how he sought to connect Chinese history with that of the world as he knew it. The year 65 in Chinese chronology places us near the beginnings of the Later Han dynasty, and is the traditional date of the arrival in China of what we know as 'Buddhism'. The phenomena which this name denotes were in many ways well known;

[20] Ibid. 1, p. 30.

the Jesuit missionaries were in no doubt that they were confronted by a religion alternative to Confucianism and alien to Christianity; but we have to adjust our minds to the knowledge that no European scholar yet understood it as a distinctive religion with its own foundations and its own history.[21] There is a history of the 'discovery of Buddhism'[22] which post-dates the writings of de Guignes; Gibbon was to speak of it as a 'mysterious subject' on which the researches of Sir William Jones's Asiatic Society might some day shed light,[23] and Jones himself was to share many of de Guignes's problems.[24] We are situated here in the pre-history of the historiography of 'Buddhism', a term which Enlightened historians did not use.

De Guignes's attempts to show that what reached Han China in 65 AD was a form of Christianity were themselves problematic.[25] The date is early enough to suggest the possibility that Indian Christianity was apostolic, a product of the travels of St Thomas, from whom Indian Christians claimed direct succession; but de Guignes seems not to say much of this, and his history of Asian Christianity is subject to two major complications. The first is his early realisation that the eastward expansion of this religion had been heretical rather than apostolic: Manichean (if this doctrine may be regarded as of Christian derivation) in the third or fourth century, Nestorian in the seventh (a subject to be of interest to Gibbon). The second is his acknowledgement, apparent in the initial passage just quoted, that there had been a 'religion de l'Inde' distinct from Christianity and, as his researches proceeded, of greater antiquity. This was to furnish him with a narrative recognisable to us as a history of Buddha and Buddhism, but not with the structure of an independent history of that religion. It rather permitted him to salve his main thesis by ranking 'Fo' or 'Boudha' among those sages of magian antiquity – Zoroaster being another – whose cosmogonies, philosophies or religions had been taken up first by Gnostics, and subsequently by Neo-Platonists and Manicheans, and made the foundation of most heretical forms of Christianity. As his readers, we find ourselves in the intellectual society of Isaac de Beausobre (whom de Guignes does not cite) and Anquetil-Duperron (whose work de Guignes encouraged but which had not yet appeared[26]). The thesis he presents looks forward to the shaping of the history of philosophy.

[21] For an earlier account of this problem, see Pocock 1990. [22] Almond, 1988.
[23] DF, VI, ch. 64, n. 33; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 806. Gibbon cannot see how to unify the apparent worship of Fo.
[24] Jones was still inclined to identify Woden with Buddha and Fo; Marshall, 1970, pp. 255, 273.
[25] The argument had been part of Ricci's polemic against Buddhism; Rule, 1986, pp. 42–3.
[26] It was not published till 1771.

Matteo Ricci, and others of the first generation of Jesuit missionaries, had encountered Buddhism, though they did not know it by that name, and been much concerned with it as their principal adversary in Chinese religion; this is why they had so largely written it out of their accounts of Chinese philosophy. They knew it mainly in cultic form, and thought of it as, unlike Confucianism, a religion of idolatry; Buddhist temples were full of paintings and statuary depicting bodhisattvas, guardians and demons. It is uncertain how much they knew of its underlying metaphysics, though there is record of an occasion when Ricci encountered the Buddhist philosopher Sanhuai at dinner, and the two essentially gentle and moderate men ended by shouting at one another; the issue being the Christian's need to convince the Buddhist that the universe must have been created by a transcendent being altogether independent of it.[27] The issue of creation *ex nihilo* was at the heart of the debate between Christians and Gnostics, Christians and Neo-Platonists, and there was emerging in Christian thought a general thesis of magian religions as entailing the emanation of both creation and creator gods from a primary condition of undifferentiated non-being; the metaphysic Gibbon had thought rather intellectual than religious.[28] It was to prove possible to assimilate Buddhism to this class of systems, but it is less clear how far Ricci had moved in that direction. It appears that he thought of Buddhists as 'Pythagoreans',[29] and this would denote less the Pythagoras of the Figurists and the *prisca theologia* than the heathen sage who had reduced the universe to a magic of uncreated numbers; the founders of the Gentile religions were always ambiguous figures, who had both preserved the religion of mankind and initiated its corruption. There were ways of showing how the cults of idols and demons, heroes and ancestors, had emerged from the primacy of non-being and been encouraged by its adepts. Ricci's 'Pythagoreans' may have been simply 'bonzes', peddlers of bad magic and underlying atheism. Confucianism, to him, discouraged demonolatry, and if it was a morality rather than a religion, that of itself might promote a purely rational theism, expressed in the concepts of *shang-ti* and *t'ien-chu*.[30]

De Guignes's insistence that the religion reaching China from India had been, at least in part, an unorthodox form of Christianity meant, as he was well aware, his treading on some very shifting ground. One of its points of origin was the tale, attractive to both the Jesuits and their sympathiser Feng Ying-ching, that the Han emperor Ming-ti had been told in a vision to seek out wisdom in the far west, but that accident or diabolic interference

[27] Spence, 1985, pp. 254–5. [28] Above, p. 32. [29] Spence, 1985, p. 251.
[30] For the problem of these terms, see Rule, 1986, ch. 2.

had diverted his enquiries from Rome to India.[31] De Guignes does not tell this story, but argues that the land of Ta-tsin mentioned in Chinese sources is invariably a Roman Empire increasingly Christian, and that when we hear of 'bonzes of Fo' reaching China from Ta-tsin, they are not Indian Buddhists but Christian priests, and 'Fo' – subsequently the name of the supreme teacher or supreme god of the religion known as Buddhism – in this case the name given to Jesus Christ himself. Evidence of direct contact between Rome and China of course fails him, and 'Ta-tsin' may be the name of a dimly perceived west in which the Roman and Sassanid empires are not distinguished. The more de Guignes is driven to argue that a Christian 'religion de Fo' reached China by way of India, the more likely it becomes that this religion was already tainted by the 'religion de l'Inde' and hard to distinguish from it; and the more does 'Fo' become a name of many meanings,

> le nom que les anciens Chinois donnoient aux fondateurs des religions etrangeres dont ils avoient connoissance.[32]
>
> [the name the ancient Chinese gave to the founders of all foreign religions that came to their attention.]

The use of this name is soon diversified. Of a people known as the Yueh-chi and in Latin identified with the Getae, we read:

> Leur Religion étoit celle de Fo ou de Boudha que plusieurs de nos Ecrivains ont cru être le même que le Wodin des Peuples du Nord; sentiment qui parôit recevoir quelque appui de ce que nous venons de dire de la migration des Getes, et peut-être est-ce par le canal de ces Peuples que ce Wodin a été connu dans le Nord; car on s'accorde assez à le faire de l'Orient. Au reste, j'avance ceci comme une simple conjecture, que je ne place ici que parce que ces événemens paroissent se lier avec l'Histoire du Nord dont nous avons si peu de connoissance.[33]
>
> [Their religion was that of Fo or Buddha, whom several of our writers have thought to be the same as the Woden of the northern peoples; an opinion that may receive some support from what we have had to say of the migration of the Getae. Possibly it was through the connection of these peoples that this Woden became known in the North, for there is general agreement that he came from the East. That aside, I advance this as a mere conjecture, placed here for no other reason than that these happenings seem to form a link with the history of the North of which we know so little.]

This is the first time we have seen a name which could be that of the Buddha, and Fo is used to form an etymology linking his name with that of Wotan or Odin. The idea of the last as an Asian figure is of considerable

[31] Ibid. 1986, pp. 41–3. [32] HHTM, II, p. 234. [33] Ibid. II, p. 42n.

antiquity; it occurs in Snorri Sturluson's preface to the *Edda*,[34] with which Gibbon became acquainted on his Italian journey in 1763–64.[35] Here Odin is a Trojan and the Aesir are Asians; they migrate to Scandinavia, from where the Goths move south against Rome. At the close of the *Decline and Fall*, published in 1788, Gibbon indicates that he has given up trying to find historic fact in this story;[36] he knows that the Goths emigrated from Ukraine and entered Roman territory by way of the Danube, and he sets little remaining store by the idea of Scandinavia as a *vagina gentium*. As we shall see further in the next chapter, de Guignes is trying to integrate the history of *le nord* with the Scandinavian peninsula as an extension of the Tartar steppe, not yet considered part of 'Europe'. What, however, would be the 'religion de Fo ou de Boudha' practised by a nomad people such as the Yueh-chi? We are not told here, though elsewhere we read of shepherd cultures whose uncomplicated worship of the natural elements rather easily turned from monotheism to superstition or to shamanism, and who as easily subscribed to more sophisticated religions with which they came in contact.[37] The name of Fo does not seem to have been affixed to the Eurasian sky-god – unless Odin All-Father is an exception – but to have preferred magian connections.

The portrait of a Fo who is Boudha is elaborated in de Guignes's second volume, and becomes recognisable as that of the historical, or traditional Buddha; it is based on a sequence of authorities extending from St Jerome to Père du Halde, and includes both Chinese and Arabic sources.[38] This figure is assigned to distant antiquity. He is born in Kashmir in 1027 BC, travels to Persia, and on his return calls himself 'l'Envoye de Dieu' and begins to preach. Indians think him a reincarnation of Vishnu, and his followers are called 'Samanéens, Philosophes qu'il faut distinguer des Brahmes'. He marries and has a son, but retires to the desert for contemplation.

> Il mourut âgé de soixante-dix-neuf ans, après avoir dit à ses plus chers disciples que tout ce qu'il leur avoit enseigné jusqu'alors n'étoit que paraboles, qu'il leur avoit caché la verité sous des expressions figurées et métaphoriques; mais que son véritable sentiment étoit qu'il n'y avoit point d'autre principle que le vuide et le néant, que tout en étoit sorti et que tout y retournoit; expressions qui ne doivent pas être prises à la lettre ni dans le sens rigoureux, comme on le verra dans la suite.[39]
>
> [He died at the age of seventy-nine, after saying to his closest disciples that all he had so far taught them was no more than parables, and that he had hidden the

[34] Faulkes, 1987, pp. 3–5. [35] EEG, p. 281.
[36] DF, VI, ch. LXXI, n. 20; Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1068. [37] HHTM, II, pp. 375–7.
[38] The references occur at ibid. II, pp. 223–38. [39] Ibid. II, p. 224.

truth from them under figurative and metaphorical language; but that his genuine belief was that there was no other principle than void and non-being, from which everything came and to which all would return. These are expressions not to be taken literally or rigorously interpreted, as we shall see in what is to follow.]

De Guignes's addendum, suggesting that non-being is itself a metaphor, reveals the underlying ambiguity which Christians detected in such doctrines; were emptiness and non-being figures of speech denoting an absolute and inexpressible God, or was this atheism, indicating a principle of being both spiritual and material, but neither personal nor purposeful? Ricci had wrestled with this problem when confronting Neo-Confucianism, and de Guignes's Europe was haunted by its most recent formulation in the writings of Spinoza. In the historiography of the ancient world, there was emerging the portrait of a class of gentile sages, who had reconciled superstition with monism by supposing that all gods, and conceivably all things, emanated from primal non-being and represented it as metaphors to the popular mind. This left room for an esoteric doctrine, in which the ultimate principle (or non-principle) was contemplated directly, and an exoteric, in which it was represented *ad captum vulgi*. Following the master's death, his followers divided along this cleavage, the latter being exemplified by Brahmins in India, upholding the many gods of that religion,[40] and (we learn elsewhere) by lamas in Tibet,[41] who may have linked the *religion de Fo* directly with the shamanism of those primitive monotheists whose 'prêtres prétendent avoir le don de la prophétie'.[42] We read at another point of a people below even the pastoral stage who had no other means of calculation but the dried droppings of goats;[43] an improving chieftain replaced these by cuts made upon wood, and it is a temptation to believe – though de Guignes does not say – that we are looking at the humble origins of the *I Ching*.

Mysticism for the few and idolatry for the masses comes close to being priestcraft[44] – the manipulation of superstition by an occult elite; but the esoteric and exoteric are held together by the doctrine of reincarnation – in which the elite were free to believe and in which the reborn soul rose above the need of polytheism and after many lives

n'est plus obligé d'aller se prosterner dans un temple, ni d'adresser ses prieres aux Dieux que le peuple adore: Dieux qui ne sont que les ministres de celui de l'univers. Ce Samanéen[45] degagé de toutes ses passions, exempt de toute impureté, ne meurt

[40] Ibid. II, p. 225.
[41] Ibid. II, pp. 234–5; cf. IV, p. 242, where we meet a 'Fo vivant', possibly the Panchen Lama.
[42] Ibid. II, p. 375. [43] Ibid. II, pp. 337–8. [44] Champion, 1994.
[45] Probably 'Sramanas', a Sanskrit term for monks and ascetics.

que pour aller rejoindre l'unique Divinité dont son ame étoit une partie detachée.[46]

[is no longer obliged to prostrate himself in a temple or to make his prayers to the gods adored by the people, who are but the emissaries of the gods of the universe. The Samanaean, set free from all his passions and cleansed from every impurity, dies only to be joined again to the single divinity of which his soul was a detached fragment.]

This divinity cannot be represented; it is called non-being because it is beyond all being; but its attributes can be represented and worshipped. All idolatry begins from this point; but the adept faces the question whether his ultimate principle is God or non-God. As with the Gnostics, the problem of creation arises; we return to the point at which Gibbon asked whether the ultimate was an intellectual abstraction or a living power.

Lorsque cet Etre voulut créer la matiere, comme il est un pur esprit, qui n'a aucun rapport avec un être corporel, par un effet de sa toute-puissance il se donna à lui-même une forme matérielle et fit une séparation des vertus masculin et feminine qui étoient concentrées en lui. Par la réunion de ces deux principes la creation de l'univers devint possible . . . De ces deux principes émanés de l'Etre suprême viennent Brahma, Vischnou et Eswara ou Routren,[47] qui sont moins des Dieux que des attributs de la Divinité; c'est à eux que le peuple rapporte tout son culte. Le souverain Etre, dans la doctrine des Samanéens ou des Philosophes, porte le nom de *Chi* en Chinois, c'est-à-dire Siecle.[48]

[When this Being –

de Guignes would seem to be begging the question –

willed to create matter, being itself pure spirit unrelated to any corporeal entity, by an effort of its own omnipotence it gave itself material form and made a separation between the masculine and feminine virtues hitherto concentrated in it. By the reunion of these two principles the creation of the universe became possible . . .

(The Big Bang as the origin of gender.)

From these principles, emanated from the supreme being, were born Brahma, Vishnu and Eshwara or Routren, not so much gods as attributes of divinity, to whom the people address their worship. The sovereign principle, according to the Samanaeans (or philosophers),

(the force of this term is not clear)

[46] HHTM, 11, p. 225.
[47] 'Eshwara' = 'Isvara', 'the lord'. Routren remains unidentified.
[48] HHTM, 11, pp. 226–7.

[bears in Chinese the name of *shih*,[49] which is to say duration]

(the Time Without Bounds encountered by Anquetil-Duperron).[50]

The Imam Rukhneddin Mohammed of Samarkand, says de Guignes, who translated some of this literature into Persian Arabic, calls *chi alem*; both have the same meaning as the *Hazarouam* or *Zarouam*[51] described by the Greek doctor Theodore of Mopsuesta, who says

qu'il est le premier principe, supérieur aux deux principes que les anciens Persans admettent.

As a Hindu *Kalpa* – or perhaps a Platonic year – it endures for thirty-six thousand years:

les Indiens [le] regardoient comme le souverain maître de toutes choses. C'est de là que plusieurs Hérésiarques chrétiens, et en particulier les Manichéens et les Valentiniens, ont pris l'idée de leurs Eons dont ils ont fait des divinités.[52]

[it is the primary principle, superior to the two admitted by the ancient Persians . . . The Indians look upon it as the sovereign master of all things. From this it was that certain Christian heresiarchs, in particular the Manicheans and Valentinians, derived the idea of those Aeons which they erected into divinities.]

All this body of doctrine arrived in China in the year 65. De Guignes does not explore its consequences in the intellectual history of China, beyond using it to buttress his thesis about Chinese interactions with the Christian west. With the appearance of the Gnostics and Manichaeans, the circle of his scenario is complete; he goes on – after telling us about a false prophet named Fo Tu-ching[53] and a rebel who named himself Fo Tai-tsu,[54] anticipating beyond de Guignes's knowledge the Taiping 'younger brother of Jesus' – to repeat that

cette religion de Fo établie alors à la Chine n'étoit autre chose qu'un Christianisme extrêmement corrompu et défiguré par les principes que les Hérésiarques chrétiens avoient pris des Indiens . . . Je dis plus ici et je regarde ce culte de Fo comme une secte particuliere de Chrétiens fondée sur les principes de Pythagore; et le Bonze Fo-tou-ching dont j'ai parlé plus haut ne me paroit qu'un Chrétien Pythagoricien ou Indien, comme étoit Apollonius de Thyanes, qui avoit fait un mêlange de la doctrine de Pythagore et de quelques idées tirés du Christianisme. En conséquence on ne doit pas être surpris de trouver à Siam les Talapoins qui vivent en communauté comme des moines et qui ont des espéces d'Evêques.[55]

[49] I am indebted to S. A. M. Adshead for suggesting this transliteration, and for other assistance in interpreting de Guignes's terminology.
[50] Above, p. 32, n. 50. [51] The Persian *Zurvan*, i.e. time. [52] HHTM, II, p. 227.
[53] Ibid. II, p. 236. [54] Ibid. II, p. 239. [55] Ibid. II, p. 240.

[this religion of Fo then established in China was nothing other than a Christianity deeply corrupted and distorted by principles which Christian heresiarchs had borrowed from the Indians . . . I will go further and say here that I regard the cult of Fo as a peculiar sect of Christians founded on the principles of Pythagoras; and the bonze Fo Tu-ching mentioned earlier seems to me a Pythagorean or Indian Christian like Apollonius of Tyana, who had syncretised the doctrine of Pythagoras with several ideas borrowed from Christianity. In consequence it should come as no surprise to find in Siam those Talapoins who live in community like monks and obey a species of bishop.]

Anti-clerical deists and *philosophes* were already making play with the last point, and it is not clear how far de Guignes understood that the Thai monastics professed the religion of Buddha. The difficulty with his thesis, of course, is that Indian Buddhism makes no mention of Christ, and the insistence that he was known by the name of Fo is not enough to establish his presence; whereas the Manichean and Nestorian heterodoxies so powerful in Central Asian and Chinese history[56] explicitly used his name and – even though sometimes absorbed into lamaistic Buddhism – were expressly not Buddhist. Had de Guignes been, like Beausobre or Gibbon, a historian of Christianity, he would have been concerned with a transmitted Indian impact on Greek theology, not with the mirror-image of Han Buddhism as a Christian import; and his Buddha precedes Christ by a thousand years. What he had achieved may be thought of as a reversal of Figurism; instead of a chain of patriarchs promulgating the truths known to Noah, the same set of figures now appears as a series of magian philosophers arriving at a system more monistic than theistic, and reconciling atheism with idolatry. Together with Pythagoras and Buddha-Fo, we expect to meet with Hermes Trismegistus and Zoroaster; and though de Guignes's horizon does not extend to Egypt, the latter does not fail to appear. As Turkish peoples penetrate Iran, they encounter some kinds of Christianity.

Mais il subsistoit dans le voisinage une Religion célébre dans l'antiquité, je veux dire celle de Zoroastre, qu'une partie des Turcs avoit embrassée . . .

Here we are reminded that Anquetil-Duperron's *Zend-Avesta* had not yet appeared, and that de Guignes had to rely on the older work of Thomas Hyde, with which he was not satisfied. He was able, however, to arrive at the conclusions we have come to expect.

Zoroastre, auteur de cette doctrine, et que je place vers l'an 683 avant Jesus-Christ, avoient établi deux principes, l'un bon, l'autre mauvois, le premier la lumiere ou Oromaze, le second les ténébres ou Ahriman; mais il y en avoit un supérior qui

[56] For an overview of their history, see Saunders, 1977, ch. 4, pp. 77–98.

les avoit engendrés; quelques auteurs Grecs lui donnent le nom de Zarouam, que les Persans appellent Hazarouam, c'est-à-dire l'espace immense des siècles, l'eternité . . .

Dans la suite, Manés qui forma sa Religion en partie sur le magisme, en partie sur le christianisme, porta lui-même sa nouvelle doctrine dans le fond du Turkestan et dans le pays d'Igour où on lui éleva des temples. Sa Religion pénétra même jusqu'à la Chine, et il pourroit se faire que ce fut là l'origine de certains traits de conformité que les voyageurs modernes ont trouvés entre quelques cérémonies chrétiennes et celles des Lamas de Tartarie. Au reste, sans recourir encore au Manichëisme, on les peut rapporter au Christianisme qui y avoit pénétré, qui s'y est corrompu dans la suite et s'est trouvé confondu et identifié avec les autres Religions du pays.[57]

[But there was in that region a religion famous in antiquity; I mean that of Zoroaster, which some among the Turks had embraced . . . Zoroaster, whom I date about the year 683 BC, had established two principles, one good and the other evil: the first that of light or Ormuzd, the second that of darkness or Ahriman; but there was one superior to both who had engendered them, and to this some Greek writers give the name Zarouam, in Persian Hazarouam, which is to say the infinity of time, or eternity . . .

At a later date Mani, who based his religion on partly magian, partly Christian foundations, in person carried his new doctrine to Turkestan and the Uighur country, where temples were erected to him. His religion penetrated as far as China, and it may be that this was the origin of certain similarities which modern travellers have noted between some Christian ceremonies and those of the Lamas of Tartary. On the other hand we may connect them, without recourse to Manicheism, with the Christianity that had reached so far and was then corrupted, becoming confused and identified with other religions of the country.]

We should wish to argue that the Manichean and Nestorian presences offer more promising lines of research than the attempt to identify Buddhism with Christian heterodoxy, and that de Guignes's inability to furnish the former, however described, with an active role in dynastic history has hampered his attempt to show the latter interacting with that of other civilisations. So much, then, for de Guignes as a historian of religion, author of a narrative in which it is never quite clear whether Confucian morality is participant. As a historian of barbarism, however, he achieves a grand narrative of interaction, carried from China to Rome, in which the encounter between the manners of the steppe and the manners of the imperial establishment does play a principal part.

[57] HHTM, II, book III, pp. 375–7.

CHAPTER 8

Hans, Huns and Romans: the rhythms of barbarism and empire

(1)

Gibbon made use of the *Histoire des Huns, Turcs, et Mogols* at intervals when writing the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. It came into play when he had to deal with nomad invasions of Roman territory and its outward marches, beginning with the fourth-century Huns who appear at the close of his second volume, and continuing through Alans, Avars, Bulgars and Seljuks until his narrative, and de Guignes's, close with the Ottomans and Timurids, peoples no longer shepherds but formed in the debris of the Mongol empire of Genghiz and his successors. This entails a complex history, no longer reducible to its basic theme of nomad invaders arriving out of an unknown pastoral wilderness; there is a history of state formation and interaction with empires, and the chief lesson Gibbon learned from de Guignes was that motor forces driving nomads westward lay in their interactions with Chinese dynastic history and the unshaken ascendancy of Confucian manners. In this chapter we investigate de Guignes's shaping of this major thesis.

It is built around a perception of Chinese history in which the sequence of dynasties alternates with the stability of manners, and the history of the nomad peoples interacts with both; while the westward movement of the latter interacts with the history of Persian, Roman and Islamic empires at the other extremity of the steppe. This complex of narratives is subjected to dynastic periodisation, itself interacting with the periodisations of other histories. That is, the disintegration of the Han empire in the third century has to do with the Hunnish impact upon Goths and Romans; that of the T'ang in the ninth not only sets the Avars in westward motion, but brings steppe history into contact with Nestorian Christianity, and far more momentously with the eastward advance of Arabic Islam through Iran to become dominant in Central Asia. After T'ang de Guignes follows the successive dynasties less closely, but traces the disintegration of the Sung

at the hands of Khitans and Mongols; the empire of Genghiz Khan gives rise to Kubilai's Yuan dynasty in China. Turkish empire develops west of the Caspian Sea, but the last act of both dynastic and nomad history is the Manchu conquest of 1643, of which it is asked whether it is simply one more in a sequence of unvarying phenomena, or whether it is perhaps the last of its kind.

De Guignes paints with a very broad brush, being obliged to co-ordinate narratives over vast spaces of geography and correspondingly lengthy periods of time. At the outset of his third volume he pinpoints the first nomad or 'Tartar' impacts on the civilisation of Islam, and sketches the history of the Seljuks and other Turks who will penetrate and take over much of the Abbasid Kaliphate and the east Roman empire. Their power is to be destroyed by the Genghizids, who will dominate China, Persia and Russia, raiding as far as Hungary; but a remnant of the Seljuks will lay the foundations of the Ottoman empire.[1] Before entering on this narrative, however, de Guignes must turn back and outline the whole course of nomad interactions with China, where he places the motor force of nomad movements across Asia; and this in turn cannot be understood without an outline of the history of the dynasties.

Cet Empire a toujours éprouvé un grand nombre de révolutions qui avoient été occasionnées ou par les Chinois eux-mêmes ou par les différentes Nations Tartares qui étoient venus s'y établir. Dans les premiers tems de son origine, il avoit été électif; mais il devint bientôt héréditaire, et la famille de Hia fut la première dont les princes le possederent à titre d'héritage. Celle de Cham lui succéda; mais les mémoires historiques qui nous restent de ces anciens tems ne sont pas suffisans ni capables de nous donner une juste idée de la véritable situation de la Chine. Ces mémoires commencent à être plus étendus sous la Dynastie des Tcheou qui regna après celle de Cham; nous voyons alors la Chine demembrée par une foule de Princes qui regnoient sur autant de petits Royaumes, et qui ne laissoient aucune autorité à l'Empereur. Ces siècles malheureux sont appellés par les Historiens Chinois *les tems des guerres civiles.*[2]

[This empire has perpetually undergone a great number of revolutions, the work of either the Chinese themselves or of the various Tartar nations who have established themselves within it. It was originally elective, but early became hereditary, and the Hsia dynasty was the first whose princes ruled by right of inheritance. The Shang succeeded it, but the historical records of those ancient times are neither full nor thorough enough to give us a clear idea of the actual condition of China. These records begin to be more detailed under the Chou, the dynasty which succeeded

[1] HHTM, III, pp. 32–3. [2] Ibid. III, p. 34.

the Shang, where we see China fragmented by a crowd of princes each ruling his petty kingdom, and leaving no authority in the emperor's hands. These unhappy ages are termed by Chinese historians the Era of the Warring States.]

The narrative proceeds to the unification by Ch'in Shih Huang-ti, whose wall fails to keep the Tartars out, and whose reign is followed by further wars until

l'établissement de la célebre Dynastie des Han. Elle commença à regner vers l'an 206 avant J.C., mais le voisinage des Tartares et principalement des Huns, dans le tems que les Chinois avoient lieu d'espérer de la tranquillité, leur occasionna des guerres longues et couteuses. Des armées innombrables, venues de la Tartarie, entrerent dans la Chine et ruinerent ses Provinces septentrionales. Dans la suite les Chinois s'aguérirent et commencerent à sortir de leurs frontiéres; ils firent la conquête de tous ces vastes pays qui sont situés entre le Maouarennahar[3] et la Chine; ils s'avancerent même jusqu'à la mer Caspienne. Un usurpateur interrompit la suite des Princes de la dynastie des Han, et fut auteur des grands troubles qui ne purent fin que par l'établissement des Han. Cette seconde branche fut longtems occupé à détruire l'Empire des Huns, et elle n'y parvint que vers l'an 95 de J.C.; mais elle approchoit elle-même à sa fin. Elle fut détruite l'an 219 de J.C.[4]

[the establishment of the celebrated Han dynasty. This began to rule about 206 BC, but the proximity of the Tartars, principally the Huns, cost it many long and expensive wars, when the Chinese might have hoped to be left in peace. Innumerable armies from Tartary invaded China and laid waste to its northern provinces. At length the Chinese hardened themselves to war and began to venture beyond their frontiers; they conquered all those vast lands situated between China and the Mawara an-Nahr and even advanced to the Caspian Sea. A usurper interrupted the succession of Han princes and was the cause of great troubles ending only with the dynasty's re-establishment. This second branch of the ruling house was long engaged in the destruction of the Huns' empire, and achieved it only about 95 AD; but it was nearing its own end, and was overthrown in the year 219.]

The following period – de Guignes has no name for it – witnesses the partition of China between Toba barbarians in the north and local Chinese rulers in the south. The great T'ang dynasty is never free from invasions and in the end perishes like its predecessor, significantly replaced for a while by a dynasty hailing from Turkestan.[5] De Guignes is now at a point where he may (perhaps must) reflect comparatively on the decline and fall of empires, and the phenomenon that calls for his explanation is that while dynasties lose their imperial power for recurrent reasons, China as a civilisation always

[3] De Guignes employs this term, the Arabic *Mawara an-Nahr*, 'land between the rivers', to denote the region known to us as Transoxiana.

[4] HHTM, III, pp. 35–6. [5] Ibid. III, p. 37.

endures. It becomes clear to him that this cannot be said of Europe; the Decline and Fall of Rome was a vast religious and cultural transformation. He offers two patterns of explanation, the latter a good deal more telling than the former.

On sera surpris qu'un Empire qui a toujours été agité par des secousses si violentes, et en même-tems continuellement exposé à l'invasion des étrangers, n'ait pas eu le même sort que tous les autres Empires. Ceux des Médes, des Perses, des Grecs et des Romains ont été détruits, celui de la Chine a toujours subsisté. A quoi devons-nous en attribuer la cause? Quelques réflexions sur l'établissement et la forme de ces Etats nous la font connoître. Nous ne pouvons pas nous étendre beaucoup sur les Empires des Médes et des Perses dont nous n'avons que des idées fort imparfaites. Nous sçavons en général qu'ils ont été formés par un Peuple peu considérable dans son origine. Plusieurs Nations voisines qui avoient des moeurs et des usages différens ont été obligées de se soumettre, et comme elles avoient chacune un génie particulier, souvent opposé, et qu'elles étoient jalouses d'être gouvernées par leurs propres Rois, elles ne restoient soumises que par la force, ainsi à la première révolution elles secouoient le joug. L'Empire d'Alexandre ne doit point être regardé de même oeil, ce n'est point proprement un Empire. Un Conquérant qui soumet rapidement un grand nombre de Provinces, dont il n'a pas le tems de former un grand corps, est prévenu par la mort; ses Géneraux qui sont à la tête de ses armées victorieuses s'emparent des Provinces où ils commandent et en composent autant de Royaumes différens. Toutes les Républiques Grecques, qui n'aspiroient qu'après la liberté et qui avoient toujours été gouvernées par leurs propres loix, saisissent ce moment pour devenir libres, et le vaste Empire d'Alexandre étoit à peine formée qu'il fut détruit. Les Romains dans leur origine étoient renfermés dans une seule ville habitée de quelques barbares. Les villes voisines étoient policées et soumises à leurs rois particuliers. Elles formoient autant de corps qui n'ont été subjugés que par la force. Les Peuples vaincus surpasserent bien-tôt en nombre la Nation victorieuse, ils furent contraints d'adopter les loix, les mœurs et la Religion des vainqueurs; l'amour de la République a fait faire des grands actions, mais si tous les Peuples de l'Italie s'étoient réunis, Rome ne serait jamais devenue ce qu'elle a été. Plus elle étendoit sa domination, plus elle accéleroit sa ruine. Quels ennemis n'eut-elle pas à combattre lorsqu'elle voulut faire des conquêtes au-delà des bornes de l'Italie? Carthage, République puissante par l'étendue de sa commerce, sa force, ses richesses, et plutôt vaincue par ses divisions domestiques que par les armes des Romains; dans la Macédoine, la Grece et la Syrie, des Rois dont les sujets étoient plus policés que les Romains qui n'étoient que guerriers. Tous ces Peuples n'aspiroient qu'à recouvrir leur liberté et rentrer sous la domination de leurs anciens Rois . . . Ils étoient en quelque sorte comme autant de prisonniers renfermés dans un même lieu, et qui sont continuellement attentifs sur les actions de leur maître pour tromper sa vigilance et sortir des fers. Lorsque les Barbares du nord vinrent se jetter dans cet Empire, ils y trouverent des Peuples assujettis aux loix d'un premier vainqueur, et qui par conséquent n'avoient pas pour ces loix

cet attachement que toute Nation doit avoir pour les siennes propres; ces Barbares n'eurent à combattre que des troupes Romaines que l'on avoit chargées de defendre un pays qui n'étoit point leur patrie.[6]

[It will seem surprising that an empire which has always been disturbed by shocks so violent, and exposed for the same time to foreign invasions, has avoided the fate of all others. Those of the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and the Romans, have been destroyed; the Chinese empire has always survived.[7] What are we to consider the cause of this? A few reflections on the establishment and character of these states will supply an answer. We cannot say much about the empires of the Medes and Persians, since our knowledge of these is highly imperfect. We know in general that each of them was achieved by a people originally of little account. Several neighbouring nations, differing in their manners and customs, were obliged to submit to their rule, and as each of these had its own character, peculiar and often contrary to that of the ruling people, and desired only to be governed by its own kings, they were held in subjection only by force and at the first opportunity shook off the yoke. The empire of Alexander cannot be analysed in the same way, since it was not really an empire at all. A conqueror who has rapidly subdued a great number of provinces, but has not had the time to form them into a single body, is surprised by death; the generals of his victorious army lay hold of the provinces they command and make of them so many different monarchies. All the Greek republics, desirous only of liberty and having always been governed by their own laws, seize this opportunity to be free, and the vast empire of Alexander is destroyed before it is truly formed. The Romans were originally confined to a single city with a few barbarian inhabitants. The neighbouring cities were civilised and had each its own king. They were so many independent bodies which only force could subdue. The conquered peoples were soon greater in number than the nation of victors, and were compelled to adopt the laws, the manners and the religion of their conquerors. Love of the republic made the Romans perform great actions, but if the peoples of Italy had united against them, Rome could never have become what it was. The further it extended its domination, the more it hastened its own ruin. What enemies had it not to encounter when it pursued conquests beyond the coasts of Italy? Carthage, a republic powerful in the extent of its commerce, arms and wealth, was conquered more by its internal divisions than by Roman arms; Macedonia, Greece and Syria, where kings had subjects more civilised than the Romans, who were little more than warriors. All desired nothing more than the recovery of their liberty and the rule of their former kings . . . They were, so to put it, like so many prisoners in a common jail, constantly watching the actions of their master in order to outwit him and cast off their chains. When the northern barbarians appeared and threw themselves upon this empire, they

[6] Ibid. 111, pp. 90–1.

[7] After the Four Monarchies, it should be observed, we meet neither a Fifth, nor the church as the stone cut without hands (FDF, pp. 105, 109, 113, 118–19) but China as a secular *longue durée*. Enlightenment has so far progressed.

met with peoples under the laws imposed by a previous conqueror, for which they had not the attachment any nation feels towards its own; and the barbarians had only to encounter soldiers commanded to defend territory which was not their fatherland.]

Gibbon must have found this thoroughly unconvincing (as might Montesquieu, whom de Guignes had clearly been reading). He had explained at length how 'the gentle influence of laws and manners' had formed the provincials into a single Roman nation, which had declined only because its manners were unsupported by military and political virtue;[8] and though we have not yet reached his account of how the provinces reacted to the collapse of Roman control, we do not expect to read that they were thirsting to be free and resume their ancient forms of government. But de Guignes is about to explain that in Chinese history the dialectic between virtue and manners simply does not operate. To understand how he goes on from the passage just quoted, we must first consider an earlier chapter, where Romans and Chinese were confronted in other terms.

Les Chinois, j'entens ici ceux qui ont part au Gouvernement, se regardent absolument comme esclaves de leur Prince, ou pour parler plus exactement de l'Etat et du peuple, et croyent ne devoir jouir qu'autant qu'ils sont utiles. Si l'Empereur accablé par ses ennemis ne peut resister, un grand nombre de ses Ministres, plutôt que de reconnôitre un nouveau maître, se donnent eux-mêmes la mort, ou vont la chercher avec une fermeté incroyable. Mais si au contraire, trop livré à ses passions, le Monarque s'écarte des vrais principes du Gouvernement, et ne veut point écouter les avis de ses Ministres, loin d'entreprendre sur la vie du Prince pour lequel ils ont une vénération qui se trouve rarement chez les autres peuples, ne voulant point participer à ses foiblesses et se regardant comme inutiles, ils se donnent encore la mort. Sont-ils guidés par vanité, et des vûes de réputation après la mort? C'est ce qu'il est difficile de bien connoître, tant leurs actions se trouvent étroitement liées avec la gloire et l'intérêt du Prince et le bonheur du Peuple. Les Romains, à qui les Chinois peuvent être comparés pour cette vertu austere, leur sont inférieurs à cette égard. Chaque Romain, par la constitution de la République, étoit Souverain et faisoit partie de l'autorité souveraine. Il avoit un intérêt particulier de la conserver: aussi lorsque cet intérêt eut cessé et que les Empereurs furent devenus les maîtres de l'Etat, toutes les belles actions se sont évanouies et on n'a plus vû que des crimes. Les Chinois loin d'être Souverains sont sous la domination d'un maître absolu et despotique. La plus grande partie de la gloire qui résulte des grandes actions que les Ministres font par l'intérêt qu'ils prennent à l'Etat rejaillit sur ce Prince qui donne le mouvement à tout. Ce n'est donc que pour la vertu et pour l'observation des Loix fondamentales de l'Empire que les Chinois se sacrifient. Ce n'est point un bien qui leur soit propre qu'ils defendent; c'est celui d'un Souverain ou vertueux ou

[8] DF, 1, ch. 2; FDF, pp. 432–40.

tyran en qui ils respectent ou la vertu ou les ancêtres, et dont ils craignent la ruine à cause des désordres que ces sortes de changement entraînent. Sans cette derniere considération ils regardent comme indifférent par qui ils soient gouvernés, pourvû qu'ils le soient bien.[9]

[The Chinese – that is those of them who take part in the government – consider themselves absolute slaves of their ruler, or to be more precise of the state and the people, and think they may only enjoy life so long as they are of service. If an emperor oppressed by his enemies can resist no longer, a great number of his ministers, rather than acknowledge a new master, will put themselves to death, or go in search of it with unbelievable resolution. But if, on the contrary, the monarch is too much given over to his passions, and departs from the principles of government, and will not heed the counsel of his ministers, the latter, far from undertaking anything against the life of a prince for whom they have a veneration rarely found among other peoples, unwilling to take part in his weaknesses and thinking themselves no longer serviceable, will once more deliver themselves to death. Are they motivated by vanity or the hope of posthumous fame? It is very difficult to be sure of this, so closely are their actions identified with the glory and interest of the prince and the happiness of the people. The Romans, with whom the Chinese may be compared in the austerity of this virtue, are at this point their inferiors. By the constitution of the republic, every Roman was a sovereign and held a share in the sovereign authority. He had a personal interest in its preservation; and so, when that interest failed and the emperors became masters of the state, all noble actions disappeared and nothing remained but crimes. The Chinese, far from being sovereigns, are under the domination of an absolute and despotic master. The greater part of the glory resulting from the great deeds, performed by the ministers out of the interest they have in the state, is reflected in the person of this prince who gives motion to everything. It is then only for virtue and the maintenance of the fundamental laws of the empire that the Chinese sacrifice themselves. It is not any good in which they have property that they are defending; it is that of a sovereign either virtuous or tyrannical in whom they respect either his virtues or his ancestors, and whose ruin they fear as a result of the disorders brought about by instabilities of this kind. Short of this last consideration, they think it indifferent by whom they are governed, so long as they are governed well.]

In this confrontation between two ideal value-systems, we see of course the Sallustian and Tacitean explanation of the Decline and Fall, with a hint of the Augustinian reproach that Roman virtue, even when carried to the point of Lucretian or Catonian suicide, was the product of pride and the *libido dominandi*. The Roman's virtue, even his sacrifice of life, is the product of his citizenship; but his liberty is a consequence of his sovereignty – *ex imperio libertas*.[10] De Guignes has not used the word liberty, but he is concerned with individuality, and this can only be the product of autonomy.

[9] HHTM, II, pp. 279–80. [10] FDF, p. 277.

The Chinese does not face the problem of empire, because he has not the *libertas* which may issue in *imperium*. He has a life, and in that sense a self, which he will sacrifice in an unmistakably public cause, but he is not in the Roman sense an individual at all. He has no share in sovereignty, because government is not exercised by an association between the virtues of autonomous individuals. At this point, however, de Guignes's analysis departs from the orientalism of western observers of the adjacent empires. The 'despotism' under which the Chinese live in a *servitude volontaire* is not that of the arbitrary will of a paranoid tyrant; it is not visualised in opposition to the property or rights of individuals expressed in a system of law, and a historical materialism such as Europeans were working out to explain their own history and that of others would be correspondingly difficult to formulate in the Chinese case. The despotism being described is purely that of manners; a code of behaviour so ironclad that virtues could not be detached from it and the individual could not imagine himself existing apart from it. The ruler was as much its slave as were his ministers, and the collective ritual suicide of the latter – ineffective in the case of Thrasea or Seneca and unimaginable in the setting of Versailles – was a means of recalling the prince to his duties or reminding him that he might soon be replaced by another.

The unstated assumption is that the Confucian *li* – the ritualised code of behaviour and the morality and metaphysics founded upon it – were absolutely the only value system known to the Chinese: the only system of government in the empire or of self-government (if this in context were not a self-abolishing concept) in the individual. By no means peculiar to de Guignes, this was to remain a governing paradigm of western thought about China through the nineteenth century and beyond. It appears to have originated, in some measure, with the Jesuits of Ricci's generation, who, in search as Jesuits often were of a ruling elite through whom to operate, chose to regard the Confucian literati in this light, and to advance a reading of their classics as a theist expression of the original religion of mankind. Later readers – some of them diminishingly Christian – saw this religion increasingly as one of natural sociability, and we reserve the term 'Enlightenment' for those who transformed theism into deism, and severed any connection between natural religion and Christianity. David Hume, who had abandoned even natural religion, saw Confucianism as a system of manners alone, a religion of society whose ritual had no spiritual content at all. So radically complete was the Enlightened reduction of Chinese culture to manners and sociability that it generated its own negation: the Montesquieuan perception of that culture as a 'despotism of manners' which

stifled human energy and virtue without the intervention of any human despot. To modern historians it is clear that this exclusive fixation on the Confucian code paralysed attempts such as that of de Guignes to provide China with a history, since it inhibited him from ascribing an active role to Buddhism or any other religion which he saw impinging on Chinese culture; barbarism and religion alike remained marginal to an unchanging Cathay, while the nomad recoil from that culture drove the history of Eurasia.

This assumption gave rise to two major historical problems. First, was Confucianism a religion? And whether it was or not, what were its relations with alien religions, originating either in the superstition and shamanism of the steppe, or in the philosophy of Gentile sages further west (but not so far west as the revelations of the truth) which had at various times penetrated the Chinese empire? We have seen de Guignes on this subject, and noted the limitations of his perception of Buddhism, which may explain why he does not read Chinese history as a dialectic between it and Confucianism. Secondly, if the Chinese proper were totally sealed within their system of manners, what were their relations with other peoples, excluded from it and so defined as barbarians, who might either invade the empire or be included within it? De Guignes had already laid down that this was a key to the dynamics of Chinese history, since Confucian manners were so anti-dynamic as to provide no history of their own making. The passage earlier quoted, which seems to overstate the fragility of the Roman empire, is immediately followed by this:

> Voyons à présent quel a été l'Empire Chinois. Dans les premiers siècles du monde, après le Déluge, une troupe d'hommes se retire dans le nord de la Chine, s'y établit et apporte avec elle des loix et la sémence des arts et des sciences. Ces hommes ne sont point animés par un esprit de conquête, l'union qu'ils s'efforcent d'entretenir parmi eux, par des loix qui ne respirent que le bien public, en fait un Peuple pacifique et religieux; les premiers Monarques de la Chine, élus par le Nation, se regardent comme des peres obligés par devoir d'aimer, de nourrir et de protéger en tout leurs enfants, même au péril de la vie. Cet esprit se transmet de génération en génération dans les Rois, et si quelqu'uns s'en sont écartés, ce n'a été que pour le faire reparoître avec plus d'éclat dans leurs successeurs. Les Chinois ont un attachement singulier pour leurs anciens usages; ils sont ennemis de toute innovation, même avantageuse. Nous les regardons comme petits à cet égard . . .
>
> La Chine dans son origine ne s'étendoit pas au-delà du Kiang; les Peuples qui demeuroient au midi de ce grand fleuve étoient des sauvages comme nous en voyons encore dans plusieurs isles de l'Inde. Plusieurs Chinois sont venus s'établir parmi eux, les ont rassemblés en société, et les ont animés de leur même esprit. Insensiblement tous ces sauvages sont devenus Chinois, et comme ils n'avoient

point de loix auparavant, celles de la Chine leur sont devenues propres; tous ont pris le caractère de la Nation Chinoise, ils se sont identifiés avec elle, et n'ont plus formé qu'un grand corps. Autour de ce vaste Empire, il y a d'un côté des montagnes inaccessibles, de l'autre des déserts affreux dans lesquels on ne pouvoir faire des établissemens. La Nation s'est trouvée renfermée dans ces bornes naturelles, et fortifiée jusqu'à un certain point contre les étrangers. D'ailleurs ces étrangers ont toujours été barbares: ainsi lorsque quelquefois ils ont été assez puissans pour pénétrer dans la Chine et s'emparer de cet Empire, l'attachement inviolable des Chinois à leurs anciens usages a forcé les vainqueurs d'adopter les loix des vaincus. L'Empire a changé de maître sans changer de loix. Lorsqu'un jour les Tartares qui le possèdent à present seront chassés par une famille Chinoise, il n'y aura que le nom de Tartare d'abolir, le gouvernement sera toujours le même, et la Nation se retrouvera dans l'état où elle étoit il y a deux mille ans . . .

C'est aussi que l'Empire Chinoise s'est conservé, et que malgrè de grandes révolutions il est toujours revenu à son premier état.[11]

[Let us now consider what this Chinese empire has been. In the first ages of the world after the Flood, a troop of humans withdrew into the north of China, settled there and brought with it laws and the rudiments of arts and sciences. These people were not moved by the spirit of conquest; the union which they laboured to maintain among themselves, by laws aimed only at the public good, made them a peaceable and religious community. The first kings of China, chosen by the nation, thought of themselves as fathers in duty bound to love, cherish and protect all their children, even at the peril of their own lives. This spirit was handed down from generation to generation of the kings, and if any strayed from it this was only to see it restored with greater lustre in their successors. The Chinese have a singular attachment to their ancient usages; they are opposed to all innovation, even improvement. We look down on them for this . . .

China at its origin did not extend beyond the Yangtse-kiang. The peoples dwelling to the south of this great river were savages like those we see today in several islands of the Indies. Some Chinese settled among them, assembled them in societies and filled them with their own spirit. By degrees all these savages became Chinese, and as they had had no laws before that time, those of China became their own; they acquired the character of the Chinese nation, identified themselves with it, and formed no other than a single great society. Around this vast empire, there are on one frontier impassable mountains, on another forbidding deserts where no permanent settlement is possible. The nation has been enclosed within these natural borders, and up to a point protected against foreign incursions. These foreigners, furthermore, have always been barbarians, so that when they have occasionally been strong enough to penetrate China and possess themselves of its empire, the unshakable devotion of the Chinese to their ancient customs has compelled their conquerors to adopt the laws of the conquered. The empire has changed masters without changing its laws. When some day the Tartars who

[11] HHTM, III, pp. 91–3.

possess it now are driven out by a Chinese dynasty, there will be nothing but the name of Tartar to abolish; the government will be the same as ever, and the nation will return to the condition in which it has been these two thousand years . . .

It is thus that the Chinese empire has been preserved, and despite so many great changes of fortune has always returned to its former condition.]

This vision of an unchanging east proposes to show how one stream of emigrants from the plains of Shinar found themselves able to formulate the laws of natural society and preserve them unaltered. The observation that they brought their own laws, arts and sciences with them probably conveys de Guignes's increasing conviction that the Chinese were by origin Egyptians; but it is more noteworthy that they retained much of the natural religion of mankind uncomplicated by the speculations of the many sages who bore the name of Fo. In de Guignes's account of their isolation from the rest of mankind it is with some surprise that we encounter, almost for the first time, the figure of the savage, and find the indigenous peoples of the south identified with the warlike hunters and forest-dwellers to be met with in Indonesia and the Philippines. These are the 'savages' encountered by the seaborne empires of the Europeans, figures of modern history of whom we will hear much more in later chapters of this volume; the Chinese, however, encounter them by land and in dynastic history. Who were their ancestors and how they made their way from the Ark and the Tower we are not told; what singles them out is that, as savages without laws or customs, they are peaceably assimilated, unlike the warrior and shepherd sons of Japhet who reach the Chinese world through the mountains and the deserts. A history comes into view in which nomads and Confucians constantly interact but neither can alter the manners of the other. This is to be de Guignes's key to unlocking both the history of an otherwise unchanging China, and the history of Eurasia as far west as Rome and Europe.

(11)

We have seen an account in the *Histoire des Huns, Turcs et Mogols* of how one stream of emigrants from the dispersal of post-diluvian mankind might reach China and the condition of agriculture, while another travelled through the steppe and became fixed in that of pastoralists. As with Thomas Carte, tracing a mainly Japhetic history as far as Ireland, de Guignes was concerned with how two peoples thus produced had ended in proximity and interaction; but it became his theme that the interaction he traced provided the dynamic of a history continental in scale. The Chinese had been the people of the Confucian customs, the ideology of an empire more passive

than most but utterly resistant to domination, or to change, by others. The Tartars – a name he sometimes used to denote a common stock of Huns, Turks and Mongols – had become a chain of nomad peoples, looking eastward towards China until their energies were absorbed by interaction with Islam in the west, to whom he attributed a flux and reflux affecting all the settled and civilised empires on the steppe's periphery. It was in their interactions with China that he found the origins of this dynamic; movements of peoples originating in Manchuria might sweep westward into the heart of Europe.

The narrative was in part geographic; the open grasslands where it was hard for humans to be other than herdsmen merged into the headwaters of the rivers that permitted Chinese agriculture, and the two systems of manners which we should call Tartar and Chinese cultures found themselves in immediate contact. De Guignes thought of the Chinese as ruled by customs impervious to change. The steppe produced cultures almost as unalterable, since it was an environment where any but a herdsman culture was almost impossible. Nomad peoples might become Chinese as they penetrated the empire and settled among its inhabitants; but at their back – here they differed from the 'savage' peoples south of the Yangtse – was always the steppe, imposing and offering an alternative culture. It was in the tensions between sinicised former nomads and their kinsmen or enemies on the grasslands that de Guignes located some at least of the causes of inner Asian instability and dynamism.

De Guignes set his account of the four classic books of Chinese antiquity in the context of a Hun attempt to acquire Confucian civility. Of this process he says:

> Ce goût pour les Sciences se repandit au-delà de la Chine, et passa chez les Barbares de la Tartarie. Les Huns envoyerent leurs enfans à la Chine pour y étudier et se former dans les Sciences. C'étoit un des moyens les plus propres pour adoucir le caractère féroce et barbare de ces Peuples, qui ne connoissoient d'autre occupation que la guerre. Ils recherchent la paix et firent alliance avec les Chinois, mais toujours contre les Huns de Nord. L'esprit de vengeance qui les animoit ne leur permettoit pas de laisser en paix cette autre partie de la Nation dont ils s'étoient separés.[12]

> [This taste for organised knowledge spread beyond China and took root among the barbarians of Tartary. Huns sent their children to China to study there and be educated by the sciences. It was one of the most appropriate ways of civilising the fierce and barbaric character of these peoples, who knew no other occupation than war. They sought peace and made alliances with the Chinese, but aimed always

[12] HHTM, II, p. 131.

against the Huns of the north. The spirit of vengeance which drove them forbade them peace with the other branch of the nation from which they had separated themselves.]

In times of dynastic weakness – which this process may help to promote – sinicised nomads may command a balance of power, threatening both to extend Chinese empire over their unassimilated kinsmen and to take over control of part or all of the empire itself. Liu-yen, whom we met earlier as the Hun student of the Four Books, plays this role in the interval between the Former and the Later Han. He

s'appliqua à policer ses Sujets, leur donna des Loix, établit des peines pour les criminels, et mit un frein au vice. Il sçut gagner le coeur des Peuples par le mépris qu'il faisoit aux richesses, et le plaisir qu'il avoit de les distribuer.

(The spirit of Machiavelli is nodding approval.)

Tous les principaux et les plus braves de la Nation vinrent se ranger auprès de lui. Il obtint ensuite la charge de Général d'Armée et le Commandement de cinq Hordes des Huns[13]

in the Chinese service. A few pages later we read:

Ce ne fut donc plus la Tartarie que les Huns eurent envie de conquérir; c'est de la Chine même dont leur Chef ose de se déclarer Roi,[14]

Liu-yen being of part-Han descent.

[(He) set out to civilise his subjects, gave them laws, decreed punishments for criminals, and acted in restraint of vice. He knew how to gain the hearts of his peoples by the disdain he showed for riches and the pleasure he took in distributing them. All the chief men and bravest warriors of the nation gathered around him. He next obtained the rank of general in the army and the command of five hordes of Huns . . .

It was no longer Tartary which the Huns aimed to conquer, but China itself, of which their chieftain dared to proclaim himself king]

though perhaps not emperor. This is not a phenomenon recurrent in Roman history, where the interactions between barbarism and empire, nomadism and agriculture, are less intimate, less immediate, but perhaps more complex and lasting; the settlement of the Goths in Europe produces a new social order, which that of nomads in China is never seen as achieving. And no barbarian king in territory formerly Roman, unless we look as far ahead as Charlemagne, turns about to effect conquests in the lands

[13] Ibid. III, p. 149. [14] Ibid. II, p. 153.

he has left behind. Liu-yen is not interested in doing so; but we are in the presence of a scenario in which nomads, sinicised or still barbaric, may be ejected from China or from their grasslands on its borders, setting up a chain reaction extending to the farthest west. Charlemagne's destruction of the Avars does not have such consequences to the eastward, though after the death of Genghiz Khan we must turn our attention from Baghdad to Peking.

De Guignes has a number of such narratives to recount. They range from the third to the thirteenth century, and are in all probability the 'new and important scenes in the history of mankind' to which Gibbon referred. Their roots in Chinese history help make them de Guignes's major contribution to the understanding of 'barbarism'. He thinks of them as uniform in character, and remarks of Attila:

> L'incursion de ce barbare qui a ravagé l'Italie, la Gaule et la Germanie, ne différe point de celle que Batou-khan fit dans la suite en Hongrie.[15]
>
> [The invasion by this barbarian, who devastated Italy, Gaul and Germany, differs not at all from the later incursion of Batu Khan in Hungary.]

Not all originate on the marchlands of the Chinese empire; the conquests of Genghiz originate on the central steppe and return to China under Kubilai, and both Mongol and Turkish history are increasingly shaped by interaction with Islam. The element of uniformity is furnished, to de Guignes's mind, by the unchanging character of pastoral society and by the vast spaces in which snowball effects originate that resemble one another. For example:

> Quoique le Tanjou eût établie sa principale demeure dans le pays de Yue-pan ou les Baschkirs, les Huns ne laissoient pas de s'étendre le long de la mer Caspienne dans le Maouarennahar jusqu'à la riviere d'I-li, d'où ils faisoient de tems en tems des courses vers Hami et la Province de Chensi. L'établissement des Sien-pi ne leur permit plus de pénétrer si avant des l'Orient, et ils furent obligés de se renfermer dans les pays situées à l'ouest de l'I-li. Les Topa qui succéderent aux Sien-pi refoulerent en quelque façon ceux-ci et quantité d'autres Tartares sur les Huns, qui par-là furent contraints de se rapprocher davantage de l'Europe. Le refoulement de toutes ces Nations vers l'ouest et le nord-ouest a dû occasionner dans l'Empire Romain ces grands irruptions dont il est parlé en l'histoire et qui furent la cause de sa ruine. Tous ces barbares, parmi lesquels ont dû se trouver les anciens habitans du nord de l'Europe, auront été obligés ou de se mêler avec les Huns et les autres Tartares, ou de leur abandonner leur pays alors trop frequemment exposé aux incursions de ces étrangers, et de descendre plus au midi sur les terres des Romains;

[15] Ibid. II, p. 324.

car il n'y a pas lieu de croire qu'ils se soient retirés dans le nord de la Siberie, pays presque impracticable et dans lequel tous les Tartares ont rarement voulu habiter.[16]

[Although the principal territory of the Tanju lay in the region held by the Yue-pan or Bashkirs, the Huns did not fail to spread along the Caspian coast of the Mawara an-Nahr as far as the Ili river, from where they intermittently raided towards Hami and the province of Shensi. The establishment of the Sien-pi forbade their penetrating so far east, and they were compelled to fall back on the lands west of the Ili. The Toba who took the place of the Sien-pi tended to force these and other Tartars upon the Huns, who were thereby constrained to move into the approaches of Europe. The regrouping of all these nations towards the west and north-west must have imposed upon the Roman empire those great irruptions of which history speaks as the cause of its downfall. All these barbarians, among whom must have been many of the former inhabitants of the north of Europe, will have been obliged either to merge with the Huns and other Tartars, or to abandon territory too much exposed to the inroads of these strangers, and to move further south into the lands of the Romans. There is no room to believe that they retreated to the north of Siberia, a country almost uninhabitable where Tartars have hardly ever been willing to live.]

From distant spaces marked by the names of unfamiliar peoples and features of geography, we emerge suddenly upon the well-lit theatre of the Decline and Fall. The Roman Empire is on the receiving end of a domino effect originating in north-west China, in which no one people need move far – though some do – to produce a great *Volkerwänderung* on the Roman frontiers. We think, as Gibbon did, of these pressures as coming out of the Pontic steppe and invading Rome through the Danube basin; but de Guignes has *le nord* in mind. From much earlier times – aided no doubt by the legendary migration of Odin, Woden and Fo – came the tradition known to Gibbon that the invaders of Rome came from the north and even from Scandinavia, that *vagina gentium* where the kingdom of Sweden called itself the kingdom of the Goths. De Guignes, notably anxious to exclude the hunting peoples of Siberia from his history of shepherds, continues:

Après que les anciens habitans du nord de l'Europe se furent retirés dans les pays méridionaux, et que les peuples Nomades de la Tartarie les eurent remplacés, ceux-ci, accoûtumés à changer de demeures, selon que leurs troupeaux en avoient besoin, ne tarderent pas à prendre à leur tour la route du midi; ainsi la Scandinavie n'a dû être qu'un lieu de passage et non la pepiniere de tous ces barbares. Plusieurs même de ces derniers n'ont pas probablement remonté si avant dans le nord, et sont entrés plus directement dans l'Europe; mais comme à l'égard des Romains ils venoient toujours du nord, on a cru qu'ils partoient de ces extremités septentrionales et

[16] Ibid. II, pp. 288–9.

qu'ils en étoient originaires. Après quelques unes de ces grandes migrations tout le nord de l'Europe auroit dû se trouver désert, et comme il paroit, par les migrations postérieures, qu'il a toujours été très-peuplé, il n'a pû l'être assez promptement pour fournir à ces grandes colonies que par les nations orientales qui y entroient les unes après les autres.[17]

[After the former inhabitants of the north of Europe had retreated southwards and nomad peoples from Tartary had taken their place, the latter, accustomed to changing their habitations as their herds required, did not hesitate before taking the road south themselves; so that Scandinavia was a passage route, not the nursery of all these barbarians. Some of these, indeed, probably did not venture so far north and entered Europe by a more direct route; but as in Roman eyes they all came from the north, it was believed that they had all set out from the furthest north and that this was the land of their origin. After several of these great migrations all northern Europe must have been deserted, and as it seems from later migrations to have been always populous, it can only have been repeopled, quickly enough to provide these great colonies, by the eastern nations coming one after another.]

It is as if the Scandinavian peninsula were perceived as a promontory of northern Asia, not yet part of the 'Europe' defined as the lower peninsula between the Baltic and Mediterranean seas. The central Asian steppe, however, offers a direct route to the heart of Europe, and de Guignes has been reading the Hungarian historians, if he does not think much of their reliability.[18] The Goths and the Huns came by way of the Danube,[19] and he moves towards the judgement that the temporary hegemony of Attila does not deserve the name of empire.[20]

The Decline and Fall – meaning the loss of military control over the Latin-speaking provinces – has now ceased to be a mysterious effect of barbarian movement out of unknown space, and acquired a narrative history whose causes run back to adjustments of Chinese rule in that empire's north-west. The Hun-driven movement of Gothic and other peoples – including Alans, whose origins de Guignes traces back to Turkish and Tartar beginnings[21] – is the greatest penetration recorded into alpine and Mediterranean Europe by forces originating on the Chinese frontiers; and of course, Decline and Fall remains the problem of Roman inability to resist it. De Guignes is constructing a history of central Asian barbarism by pursuing the fortunes of its three major peoples, and as he moves on from Huns to Turks and Mongols he travels far past the point reached by Gibbon in his volume of 1776; though since Gibbon had already begun reading de Guignes, it is possible to wonder how the latter's work shaped

[17] Ibid. [18] Ibid. II, pp. 290n, 297. [19] Ibid. II, pp. 292–3.
[20] Ibid. II, p. 324. [21] Ibid. II, pp. 279–81.

the former's projection of further volumes. De Guignes projects and carries out further narratives. Both the rise and the decline of the T'ang dynasty occasion enquiries into the history of the Turks, an originally Tartar people who are displaced and move westward, to the point where we have seen them coming into contact with Iran and the religion of Zoroaster;[22] the Avar invasions as far as Hungary mark the westward reach of this process.[23] The seventh and eighth centuries, however, are the era of that incalculable change in world history, the advent of Arabic Islam, which in over-running and transforming Iran establishes a new religion, empire and civilisation in the west of the central steppe. The nomad peoples are now required to interact with Islam as well as China, and the former is both more expansive and less impervious than the latter. It will come to dominate central Asia (and northern India), but the Ottoman Turks – a people not nomadic and formed by a different history – will establish empire over much of the Muslim world now in formation.

De Guignes's historical perceptions were formed by his Arabic as well as his Chinese sources, but it is fair to say that the motive force of his history remained the interaction between nomad and Confucian culture and society. This was a history transformed in western Asia by the encounter with Islam and the formation of the Ottoman empire, while remaining essentially unchanged in the east of the Old World, where the barbarian and the settled cultures were presented as altogether static. Theirs was a meeting of the shepherd and the cultivator; but it would be a mistake to infer from this that de Guignes was a subscriber to stadial theory. The twinned images were far older than the theory, and he was not a philosopher recounting the history of either natural law or political economy. His roots were in the Mosaic and Noachic chronologies, and he was untouched by Smith's need to present the shepherd stage as dynamic in the progress of society (of which he has nothing to say). It is a consequence that 'savage' or hunter societies defined as not even pastoral appear here and there in his narratives, but are not important there. We hear of a people of swineherds who make no use of horses or cattle,[24] and we have already met with those ancestors of the Avars who could calculate only with the dried turds of goats.[25] There is mention of northern and Siberian food-gathering peoples 'qui n'avoient aucune connaissance des Loix, ni même des saisons'[26] – presumably because they were neither graziers nor cultivators – and others who

[22] Above, p. 132. [23] HHTM, II, pp. 337–8, 350ff. [24] Ibid. II, p. xlv.
[25] Above, p. 128. [26] HHTM, III, pp. 5–6.

regardent comme une folie de s'amuser à nourrir des animaux dans le tems que la nature en offre de toutes parts qui sont élevés, et qui peuvent fournir la nourriture et l'habillement. Ils sont pour le moins aussi barbares que les sauvages de l'Amérique; mais ils se croyent heureux, et le sont en effet, puisqu'ils le croyent.[27]

[think it folly to play at feeding animals when nature offers them to us on every piece of high ground and they can both feed and clothe us. They are at least as barbarous as the savages of America; but they think themselves happy, and indeed are so, since they so believe.]

We met them in Adam Ferguson, as the probable colonists of America,[28] and here they have the lineaments of the innocent if not the noble savage. De Guignes knows the rhetoric of stadial theory but is not concerned to construct one, and his Siberians never become actors in history. A rather more troubling problem appears when Russian explorers report an advanced metallurgy among nomads, since theory declares that people at this stage are insufficiently specialised to develop it; but de Guignes supposes – much as Gibbon does in the case of the Goths[29] – that weapons and artworks were obtained from others, by trade or as booty.[30] Another possibility appears when Turkish tradition depicts the ancestors as mountain-dwelling smiths, smelting and forging iron for the use of shepherd warriors;[31] but this is mentioned rather than developed. Durin's Folk do not fit easily into the progress of society.

These are exceptional observations, occurring on the philosophic margins of de Guignes's history. His accounts of the Seljuk, Genghizid and Ottoman empires were to be invaluable to Gibbon when the latter's narrative reached them, and depart furthest from the simple model of nomad-Chinese interactions; but it was this that enlarged Gibbon's understanding of barbarism to something on a continental scale. De Guignes summed this up in a relatively early passage.

On doit conclure de-là –

he has been describing the expulsion of the Khitan by the ancestors of the Manchu –

que la Chine et la Tartarie ont causé de grandes revolutions dans le monde. La plûpart des Peuples Tartares qui étoient devenus puissans se sont maintenus d'abord au nord de la Chine; ensuite lorsque les Chinois ont été assez forts pour les chasser, tous ces Tartares se sont jettés en foule du côté de l'occident. L'Empire Romain

[27] Ibid. IV, p. 448. [28] NCG, pp. 333–41. [29] Above, p. 94.
[30] HHTM, II, pp. 387–8. [31] Ibid. II, p. 350.

a succumbé sous le grand nombre de ces Barbares, la Perse a été soumis pendant quelque tems, et l'Empire des Arabes va passer sous leur domination. Ces Tartares semblables aux flots de la mer se refoulent continuellement les uns sur les autres.[32]

[We should conclude further that China and Tartary have been the cause of great upheavals in the world. Most of the Tartar peoples who have become powerful were first established in north China, and when the Chinese were strong enough to expel them, all these nations were thrown in masses towards the west. The Roman empire crumbled under the weight of these barbarians, Persia was for some time subject to them, and the empire of the Arabs was to pass under their domination. These Tartars, like the waves of the sea, continually overtake one another.]

The image becomes an even grander historical metaphor when de Guignes comes to consider the pandemic of the fourteenth century.

Cette peste que l'on appelle *la peste noire*, née dans la Chine et portée dans tous les pays du monde, sert à nous indiquer la route par laquelle toutes les différentes nations faisoient entr'elles le commerce, et comment, avant qu'on eût doublé la Cap de Bonne Espérance, les marchandises étoient apportées du fond de l'Orient jusqu'aux extremités de l'Europe.

De Guignes describes the unification of the trade routes by the Mongol empire and their passage through Constantinople, and how the plague followed them to spread throughout Asia and Europe.

C'est aussi qu'il s'éleve dans les pays les plus éloignés des fléaux dont on ignore l'origine, et qui inondent de proche en proche toute la terre. On peut comparer à cette peste ces essaims de Barbares venus des mêmes contrées, et qui ont ravagé tout le monde. C'est en considérant l'histoire générale du genre humain, et en comparant ses différentes parties les uns avec les autres, que l'on parvient ainsi à connoître les grandes révolutions qui ont changé la surface de la terre; nous voyons leur origine, leur marche, et le rapport qu'elles ont entr'elles dans les pays les plus éloignées.[33]

[This plague known as the Black Death, born in China and carried into every country in the world, seems to show us the routes by which the several nations carried on commerce with one another, and how, before the passage of the Cape of Good Hope, merchandise was transported from the farthest east to the extremities of Europe . . .

It is thus that in the most distant countries there arise evils whose origin is unknown, and which inundate, point by point, the whole earth. This plague may be compared to those swarms of barbarians who have come from the same lands to ravage all the world. It is by considering the general history of the human race,

[32] Ibid. III, pp. 122–3. [33] Ibid. V, pp. 226–8.

and comparing its several parts with one another, that one comes to understand the great revolutions which have changed the face of the globe; we may see their origin, their progress, and the connections between them in lands distant from one another.]

The global commerce which permitted the Black Death was a creature of the barbarian invasions, and its contagious effects followed exactly the same course. The history of barbarism remains something of a natural history, and the reason is that it is a history of peoples whose manners never change. This is less true in the west than it is in the east; Islam changes the barbarians, whereas Confucian manners change neither the barbarians nor themselves. Nomads may become Chinese, but the Chinese will as readily expel the nomads as assimilate them, and when Huns or Khitans or Mongols or Manchu return to the steppe, they will have no option but to return to the ancient rhythms of the herdsman's life.

Tel est l'état actuel de ces anciens Maîtres de la Chine et de toute l'Asie. Ces peuples après avoir eu autrefois parmi eux les plus grands hommes dans les Sciences, dans le Gouvernement et dans le guerre, et après avoir adopté les Loix d'un pays aussi policé que la Chine, devoient porter ces Loix dans la Tartarie, et policer ces vastes pays. Mais toutes les sciences, la connoissance des Arts et des Loix de la Chine se sont évanouies en passant la grande muraille; elles sont restées à la Chine, et les Mogols sont rentrés dans leurs pays aussi grossiers qu'ils en étoient sortis; ils ont repris leurs tentes et les troupeaux. La même chose est arrivée à tous les autres Tartares qui ont conquis la Chine, et la même chose arrivera toujours, tant qu'une Nation policée ne soumettra pas la Tartarie, et ne bâtira pas de grandes villes dans ces plaines immenses, qui n'inspirent aux habitants que la vie champêtre.[34]

[Such is the present condition of the former masters of China and all Asia. These peoples, after having had among them the greatest men in learning, government and war, and after adopting the laws of a country as civilised as China, sought to carry these laws into Tartary and civilise that enormous land. But all science, all knowledge of the arts and laws of China, vanished at the passage of the Great Wall; they were left behind in China, and the Mongols returned to their homeland as ignorant as when they left it; they went back to their tents and their herds. The same happened to all other Tartars who conquered China, and the same will always happen, unless some other civilised nation should conquer Tartary and build great cities in those immense plains, which can instil nothing in their inhabitants but a roving life.]

Voltaire – and Gibbon after him – entertained such hopes of an expanding Russia; but de Guignes, who had Voltaire as an enemy, seems not to do so. And the Chinese will never conquer the steppe; when some day the

[34] Ibid. IV, pp. 243–4.

Manchu are driven out, China will revert to its own unchanging pattern.[35] As we know, this prediction was to be falsified; something else happened. De Guignes had used the collision of two wholly static cultures to provide the history of barbarism with a dynamic covering the history of Eurasia as a single system.

[35] Above, pp. 142–3.

PART III

The New World and the problem of history

CHAPTER 9

The invention and discovery of savagery

(1)

So far in the construction of this volume, we have been concerned to show that barbarians were inhabitants of the Old World and figured in ancient history, and that their character as nomadic central Asians accompanied and even preceded their identification with the shepherd stage of stadial history – itself a construct far older than its theoretical perfection by Scottish philosophers of history, who gave it a central importance. It is a consequence of these theses that barbarians were from an early date present in written historiography, which had its own means of including them in history; this was so from that in many ways foundational moment when Herodotus composed the opening sentences of his work. In the invention of the concept of barbarism, therefore, there is no moment without encounter with actual peoples – not all of them Scythians, shepherds or nomads – to whom it was expedient to apply the term, and no moment without a historiography in whose scenarios they might be included. We are now to turn to the very different history of the 'savages', peoples whom we shall find inhabiting the new worlds opened to Europeans by oceanic discovery, and therefore figuring in the 'modern' history which navigation helped to establish. This proposition is paradoxical, to the extent to which we imagine 'savagery' as primeval and prehistoric, the first stage in a stadial sequence in which it precedes the shepherd stage and in that sense appears more ancient; it is a paradox to meet with 'primitive' peoples only in modern history. The paradox is dispelled, however, if we recognise that we have to do with a history of invention, operating at a distance from encounter; the image, rhetoric and possibly discourse of savagery were to some extent in place before the encounter with the peoples to whom the concept was applied. This is to imply that 'savages' were invented in the Old World but encountered in the New, and further that there did not exist a previous history of encounter with them, as we have seen that there did

in the case of 'barbarians'. The encounter was therefore managed with the aid of disciplines other than historiography, many of which it is still correct to describe by the name of 'philosophy.' We are dealing with the period, known as 'Enlightenment', in which historiography and history were undergoing reconsideration in the light of various kinds of 'philosophy', and it is a consequence that the 'savages' of the 'New World' were included in philosophic history but not in the narrative structures of civil history, with the further consequence that they were very nearly excluded from 'history' as it came to be imagined, and relegated to the alternative conceptual universe of 'nature'. This chapter and the next endeavour to re-describe this process, of which the equation of the 'savage' with the 'hunter-gatherer' of stadial history is an important feature. How these themes are related to that of 'empire', as it arises in this volume and its predecessor, is the matter of further and concluding chapters.

(11)

The concept of the savage, then, is older than the historic encounter, and we may conveniently begin from a point where 'savage' and 'barbarian' were not distinct but interchangeable terms,[1] as we have seen they sometimes still were for Goguet and even Gibbon.[2] This point antedates the perfection of the stadial scheme, and occurs in the context of Aristotelian and Ciceronian civil philosophy as developed by scholastic theologians and jurists. The two terms were linked to denote those humans who had not achieved, and perhaps were incapable of achieving, the natural end of human life, which was to live in cities and display the social and political virtues, including the exercise of freedom. Freedom, however, was a condition of rule over oneself and others, the latter including both equals and inferiors; it was right that those who could not rule among equals should be ruled by those capable of liberty; and once the 'barbarian', the non-Greek and non-Roman, was defined as lacking the capacity to live in a community of citizens, there arose the possibility of defining him and her as a 'slave by nature' – those in the Greek or Roman city who were not citizens being either slaves or women. Gender operated otherwise; Greek and Roman women, while denied political capacity, were not thought of as barbarous or servile. 'Barbarians' and 'savages' were thus defined as lacking, either accidentally or essentially, some of the attributes of humanity.[3]

[1] Pagden, 1982, ch. 2, pp. 15–26, is an indispensable introduction to this interchangeability.
[2] Above, pp. 149–52 (Goguet), 38–9 (Gibbon). [3] Pagden, 1982, chs. 2–3.

Of these terms 'barbarian' was by far the older, and was surrounded by a richer discourse. It had been used by Greeks to denote all non-Greeks, and particularly the cultures of the Achaemenid empire thought to be governed despotically by kings living in palaces, though there had emerged a crucial distinction between 'Asian' or 'eastern' barbarians, civilised but not free, and 'Scythian' or 'northern' barbarians, 'free' in a primitive sense but not civilised. The term 'savage' is neo-Latin and therefore much later, but there existed in Greek thought a concept of primeval or pre-social humans, who wandered in small father-dominated groups and lacked the attributes of sociability, including law and counsel, which were easily taken as the attributes of humanity.[4] These beings, almost pre-human, were often defined as Cyclopes or Titans, and we have met them in neo-classical ethnology. Polyphemus, the Cyclops of the *Odyssey*, is the portrait of an individual of this species,[5] and several of his characteristics may be noted here. He is of monstrous size, indicating the trope that pre-humans were earth-born or 'giants'; the Hebrew epic had 'giants in the earth' before the Flood, and Gibbon's 'fierce giants of the North' are Polyphemus's remote and far more human descendants. He is a solitary, so much so that he is not even a patriarch; he appears to exist in a condition of morose celibacy, from which later giants emerged to practise rape and marriage by capture, and though he has neighbours they do not know much of one another. He is not, as in later theory he would be, a hunter or food-gatherer, but a shepherd; not, however, a nomad, though Cyclopes were thought of as wanderers, but a cave-dweller who folds his sheep where he sleeps at night. Finally, he is a cannibal, an attribute that became so far definitional of the 'savage' condition that it became problematic when encountered in peoples who were neither vagrants nor cavemen; Westerners have been obsessed with cannibalism to a point where they have been accused of inventing it where it did not exist (as was not the case with James Cook's voyages, well known to Gibbon). The immediate point is that sociability was so far identified with humanity that the 'savage' or pre-social man was regularly charged with practices contrary to 'nature', of which cannibalism, incest and sodomy were recurrent to a point approaching invariability. What if any encounters had led ancient Aegean seafarers to the invention of Polyphemus appears not to be known; but by the time of late scholastic literature the image of the savage was well formed along those lines. It was accompanied, however, by an altogether contrary ancient image of pre-social man: that of the 'golden age' or age of innocence, in which humans had lived with so few desires

[4] Aristotle, *Politics*, I.ii, 7, 9. [5] *Odyssey*, IX.

that there had been no need and no means of regulating them. They had gathered food as they found it; they had mated as they pleased, sometimes without so much as an incest prohibition; and since there was enough for all, their desires had never become competitive and coercive laws had been unknown. From this arose the myth of the innocent or noble savage, side by side with that of the feral and ferocious savage and co-existing with it in the relation of light to darkness. The Cyclopes were paired with the Lotus-eaters. Both, though perhaps peculiarly the feral or Cyclopean image, were to play their part in invention as well as encounter.[6]

Etymologically, however, the 'savage' is a forest-dweller: a *silvaticus* or *selvaggio*, a faun, satyr, or 'wild man of the woods', inhabiting the *selva oscura* of such obsessive imaginative concern to medieval societies engaged in clearing it for cultivation. While alien and unrecognisable groups may well have been met with by the peasants, seigneurs and clerics engaged in the agricultural development of Europe, there is little evidence of encounter with hunter-gatherer cultures during these centuries, compared with the plentiful literature recording encounter with moorland or highland cattle-raisers and cattle-raiders which did so much to shape the European image of the 'barbarian', notably but not exclusively in the Gaelic west.[7] And clerics who associated Christian belief with good letters might almost anywhere encounter isolated peasant communities so illiterate that they did not seem to be Christians at all;[8] an encounter which gave a Christian dimension to the scholastic Aristotelian belief that 'savages' and 'barbarians', not yet differentiated, were those so remote from settled, manorial and urban 'good government' that they lacked the *humanitas*, even the humanity, of which these were the preconditions if redemption through Christ was the perfection. Barbarians were perhaps more readily encountered, and to that degree less simply invented, than savages, but that alone did not enforce a clear differentiation between the two.

This body of ideas, philosophical, poetical, mythical and rarely historical, had been organised into authoritative texts by scholastics and humanists, and may be – as it has been – examined as a literature determinative of thinking by the time of the greatest encounter in European, American and perhaps world history: that between Europeans and Caribbean and American populations of what came in the early sixteenth century to be known as the New World. The shock of the unfamiliar in this encounter can hardly be overstated, and differentiates it from the voyagings at the same

[6] See Muthu, 2003, ch. 1, for the role of 'noble savagery' in Enlightened thinking.
[7] Bartlett, 1993; Gillingham, 2001. [8] Pagden, 1982, pp. 196–7.

time which brought direct encounter with Islamic and Asian civilisations already known to exist. The very large continents inhabited by 'Indians' were unmentioned in any sacred or secular text, and their assimilation – above all, that of their human inhabitants – to what Christians knew and believed about the universe raised problems for theology, philosophy and in the third place history, which threatened to modify and subvert all these disciplines. Once it was determined that the inhabitants of the New World were human beings and not para-human monsters, means had to be found of integrating them with both sacred history – in particular the Mosaic narrative of the Creation, the Flood and the Dispersal of the Peoples – and the Aristotelian philosophy of nature, society and law which had ascended to a share in the authority of theology. There exists an extensive modern literature on the history of these debates, here selectively and summarily treated for the particular purposes of this volume.[9] It soon came to be dominated, and is so treated by modern scholars, by the central problem, treated overwhelmingly in Aristotelian and Thomistic terms, of the nature of the American peoples and of Spanish rule over them. Were the former slaves by nature, barbarians and savages, who could be governed only as belonging to that condition, or must they be considered as potentially or actively of a higher degree of humanity? Was Spanish rule, rapidly expanding beyond civil government and empire to the expropriation of their lands and the appropriation of their labour, tyrannical in the sense that it could not be justified, despotical in the sense that Americans were slaves by nature, or justifiable in the sense that they were beings capable of membership in a universe of justice and freedom? Scholastic theology and jurisprudence dealt with these questions in a context where the strangeness of American humanity was at tension with neo-Latin understandings of barbarism and civility, history and nature, and compelled re-examination and defence of many of the terms of their vocabulary. If it did not compel a new theology or philosophy, the New World demanded a new history, in both the philosophical and the narrative senses of the word; and this demand continued to press on historiography in the philosophically very different conditions of Gibbon's time.

(III)

The debate on the New World thus soon came to focus on the problem of bringing its peoples within the explanatory structure of an Aristotelian

[9] Hanke, 1959, 1965; Elliott, 1970; Fernandez-Santamaria, 1977; Pagden, 1982, 1993, 1995; Brading, 1990; Muldoon, 1994; Kupperman, 1994.

progress from barbarism to civility, a scheme of ideas which had been challenged and partly replaced in the Protestant and Enlightened intellectual cultures of the eighteenth century. By the middle of the sixteenth, Spanish theologians and jurists applying this scheme were aware that it must take account of a wide diversity among American cultures, which they must attempt to bring within its paradigms. There were – or had been until their very recent destruction – the cities and empires of Mexico and Peru, displaying high levels of social and religious organisation and possessing arts inclusive of what might be readable systems of civil communication and historical record. There had existed, still existed, and were being brought within systems of directed labour, a great variety of more or less settled societies; and beyond these there remained – their number increasing as exploration extended – as great a variety of mobile groups moving through forests as *silvatici* or deserts as *nomades*, speaking languages so diverse as to be untranslatable and engaged in social practices very hard to understand, that left room for the suspicion that unnatural customs – incest, sodomy and above all anthropophagy – were prevalent among them. Here were the Cyclopes of ancient thought, and here would be the savages of modern. A history, or rather a historiography, of re-description lay before them, and many would not survive it.

There arose attempts to construct a developmental typology of American societies or cultures, compatible with both Aristotelian philosophy and Mosaic chronology; a philosophical history arising from the former and a narrative history from the latter. These have been termed 'the origins of comparative ethnology',[10] and indeed stand at the origins of European study of globally distributed human cultures, but it does not follow that the categories of Aristotelian thought were being much modified in constructing them. Bartolomé de Las Casas and José de Acosta, pioneers of this enterprise,[11] stressed that human 'nature' was not fixed and unalterable, but permitted certain kinds of change and development; but Aristotelian 'nature' progressed from potentiality to actuality, and the two contexts in which the Spaniards saw this happening – those of climate and custom – were well recognised in ancient thought. There was indeed a doctrine of 'second nature', according to which the customs adopted by a people fixed its accidental and individual nature in ways almost beyond human power to alter or reform;[12] and the circumstances to which customary behaviour was an adaptive response might be the product of historical contingency and

[10] Pagden, 1982; the subtitle of his book.
[11] Ibid. chs. 6, 7. [12] Pocock, 1975 (2003), ch. 1.

fortuna (the *moyenne durée*) or of climate and environment (the *longue*). It was therefore philosophically possible for Las Casas and Acosta to suppose ways in which climate and custom had combined to account for the diversity of American cultures, and they were aided here by the flexibility and even relativism of which the term 'barbarian', unlike the more rigid term 'savage', was capable. It had originally meant no more than one speaking an unknown tongue, and had been applied to the high cultures of Egypt and Persia, as well as to the more 'barbaric' Thracians, Scythians and Gauls. How it was that Greeks were free by nature and barbarians servile came later. A 'barbarian' might be little more than a stranger or Other, and to a Christian even his own Greco-Roman culture might be 'barbarian', both because he knew truths it found incomprehensible and because salvation through Christ had raised his human potential to a level of actuality higher than was possible to a pagan.[13]All levels of American culture were in this sense 'barbaric', from the imperial Inca to the cannibal Tupinamba, and the concepts of civilisation and savagery had been satisfactorily enclosed within a sophisticated and historically accurate use of the concept of the 'barbaric'.

But given that the Tupinamba were cannibals,[14] it had yet to be explained how a number of American cultures had reached the condition of 'savagery', wandering, speaking unintelligibly, having no knowledge of God and observing none of the fundamental human prohibitions or commandments – not even, it was interestingly observed, cooking their food, clean or unclean, before they ate it[15] – on the scale on which the Spaniards thought they had encountered this condition. Here we may take account of José de Acosta's best-known contribution to world ethnology: his suggestion of a land bridge between north-east Asia and north-west America – both entirely unmapped as far as he knew – over which the original settlers of both continents had passed from the cradle of mankind.[16] Here he was adumbrating a doctrine which in some form still obtains and was not philosophically attacked until the late work of Anquetil-Duperron,[17] but his intentions in so doing were biblical and Noachic. The crossing to America had been made by the sons of Japhet, and in particular those of Magog the son of Japhet;[18] and since we know that Magog was the ancestor of herding peoples we are close to an ur-text of Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Ferguson, however, used the distinction between herding

[13] Pagden, 1982, pp. 125, 128. [14] Ibid. p. 83. [15] Ibid. pp. 88–9.
[16] Ibid. pp. 192–7. [17] Abbatista, 1993.
[18] Pagden, 1982, p. 193. This did not preclude attempts by other scholars to derive various American cultures from Ham or Shem.

peoples and hunting, crucial to the stadial sequence in its Scottish form, and this does not seem to appear in Acosta's scheme, or anywhere in Spanish thought so far. Acosta is using Japhetic descent to bring the primeval Americans within the narrative of sacred history; in philosophical history – Acosta is writing a species of this – the Japhetic thesis stands at the origins of both barbaric civility and barbaric savagery, and there is a sense in which it defines Americans as gentiles rather than barbarians. It does, however, offer an explanation of the Cyclopean condition of the most brutish wanderers, and this is what we earlier met with in Goguet: the further human groups wander from their point of origin, the more likely they are to forget all moral and social knowledge, so that barbarism increases as the square of the distance until the point of cannibalism is reached.[19] In chapter 15 of this volume, we shall meet with an unexpected philosophical development of this thesis by none other than Denis Diderot. For the present we are in Mosaic sacred history, and the downhill journey towards anthropophagy is less likely to have begun from Ararat with Japhet than from the plain of Shinar, with Magog as a companion of Nimrod. It remains for some legislator like Lycurgus, or some synœcist orator as imagined by Cicero,[20] to gather the Cyclopes into cities and reverse the journey uphill towards civility. Finding such a culture-hero in the antiquity of America would not be easy, and there were a great many societies on which he did not seem to have acted.

(IV)

Acosta – I am following here the analysis of his work by Anthony Pagden – supplies a stadial ranking, if not a historical sequence, of pre-Columbian American societies, based on the linked concepts of language and religion. At the bottom of the scale stand the Cyclopean or savage societies: small wandering kin-groups, speaking idiosyncratic languages unintelligible to outsiders[21] and superstitiously worshipping objects to which they ascribe magical powers. Above them are to be found the majority of 'Indian' peoples, capable of settlement and obedience to chiefs and captains but not of either the material or the political life of cities; their languages are more widely distributed and their religion is organised and articulate. Finally, there are, or have been, the Inca and Aztec 'empires', in which cities appear and rule over their rivals and inferiors; their religion is priestly and

[19] Above, pp. 45–7.
[20] Pagden, 1982, p. 70; Cicero, *De inventione,* I, 2–3.
[21] Pagden, 1982, pp. 157–8.

hierarchical – even if satanically inspired[22] – and their language sophisticated to the point where it can begin to express abstract ideas and may have begun to develop a readable script. Here there appears the distinction between pictograms, ideograms and alphabets, of such importance to subsequent linguistic theory. Las Casas had made rhetoric dependent on writing when he said that until one can see what one has said, one cannot articulate one's speech;[23] an argument which clearly privileges phonetic and alphabetic writing, and brings us in sight of the contention that non-literate cultures cannot preserve and transmit knowledge.[24] We are also in sight of the great debates that dominate subsequent New World historiography: the debates whether the Inca and Aztec systems were truly historic empires, lacking as they did an alphabetic script, an abstract vocabulary, or a history of philosophy and religion like that so prominent in Greco-Roman, Greco-Egyptian and Greco-Iranian history as Renaissance and Enlightenment minds understood it. For the purposes of the present volume and series, it is important to stress the absence of philosophy; but there were material absences from pre-Columbian culture – the wheel, the plough, ferrous metallurgy and coinage – of equal or greater significance in the debates that arose as to whether the ancient Americans were barbarians (a term of wide application) or merely savages.

It is easy to see that a culture encountering another, new and strange to it, can evaluate the latter only by the standards already familiar to the former and used in its self-evaluation; easy also to see that when the former finds itself dominant and seeks to extend that domination further, it may judge the encountered culture inferior by enumerating what it has not that the encountering culture has. This has of course happened, and there is a long, continuous, though not invariant history of Eurocentrism that needs frequent retelling; but we understand it better, though we do not mitigate its effects, if we keep in mind that the concepts Europeans have used to relegate and repress others are at the same time those they have used to understand and even criticise themselves; that these have played dynamic and contested roles in the mental history of their own civilisation. It is important to keep this in mind as we traverse the gap that separates or connects Acosta's thinking on American barbarism and savagery, and the thinking on the same subjects of Gibbon's contemporaries.

Acosta's stadial scheme, if we may so call it, has much to do with the occupation of terrestrial space; savages wander through it, settlers occupy

[22] Ibid. pp. 174–6. [23] Ibid. p. 130.
[24] For Acosta's elaborate and sophisticated linguistics, see ibid. pp. 182–90.

it, empires rule over it, and language develops in ways commensurate with this sequence. By the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the juristic and philosophical thinking with which Gibbon, Robertson and Smith were acquainted was presenting a theoretical history of occupation heavily based on the concept of appropriation, and was moving towards a stadial history of the modes of production, involving distinctions between those which did or did not appropriate the earth's surface, and between those which did so in different ways. We take the Scottish development of a stadial sequence to have been a culminating point in this history, though the latter had a long future before it in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries; and to understand its role in the conceptual history of barbarism and savagery, in the New World and the Old, we need to look at intellectual changes between Acosta's time and Gibbon's. Since Acosta's writings – like those of Vitoria, Las Casas, Suarez and many others – were translated from Spanish into French and English where they were not available in Latin, they may have played their part in this transition, and in following the account which has been constructed of the pervasion of theories of occupation by theories of appropriation, we must be careful to avoid suggesting that the latter were absent from Spanish philosophical and historical discourse. Enlightenment as we know it, however, is a story told north of the Pyrenees.

We are accustomed – as were philosophers and scholars in the eighteenth century – to suppose a fairly sharp transition from Aristotelian and scholastic notions of natural law to others more Grotian and 'modern'; a transition occurring partly in Dutch and English Protestant contexts and resting on metaphysical changes at levels deeper still. The new doctrines were juristic and contentious, and in place of supposing society and government to be natural they enquired how such phenomena might have originated in nature. Emphasis fell on what certainly no longer needed to be invented, the concept of a state of nature, in which humans had possessed neither society nor government but had set about providing themselves with both. This was imagined as a condition in which humans were occupying the earth for the first time, and had passed from states of positive or negative community to the appropriation of demarcated areas by families or individuals, who had proclaimed their property in what they possessed and had in due course discovered that authority (*jus*) was necessary to the protection of rights (also termed *jus*). Images of plural appropriation, and of territories both contested and governed, linked the idea of occupation with that of the commonwealth or state.

This process departing from a state of nature might be identified with any of a series of moments in biblical history: the wanderings over an earth

not yet appropriated by the sons of Cain after their father's banishment, the sons of Noah after the universal flood, or of the peoples dispersing from Shinar after the Confusion of Tongues. It was not easy for Sir Robert Filmer to explain how the original kingship of Adam had survived these catastrophes, and a diversity of peoples traversing a wilderness encouraged the thought of a diversity of modes of appropriation and society. Jurists were anxious to explain, however, that the state of nature was a theoretical model, operative at any moment in history and requiring identification with none; but if asked whether there had been or now was any moment in time or space at which humans might be seen in this state of being, they not uncommonly adduced the 'savages' of America, supposed as roaming an earth which they had not appropriated and consequently living without government. The writings of Acosta are enough to show us how easily it might be added that such peoples would have little language and no religion either.

The image of the hunter or hunter-gatherer – of equal antiquity but only now present in the argument – here made its appearance, as explaining how 'savages' lived upon an earth whose surface they did not appropriate or cultivate. The state of nature, however, was largely a self-abolishing concept; humans had been supposed in it as a means of seeing how they might come to get themselves out of it; but in neither America nor Siberia were savages to be observed taking the crucial steps towards leaving a condition in which they had lived since patriarchal antiquity. It might be that the savage condition perpetuated the mental qualities and customs it generated, and that only the intervention of God or civilised peoples could free men and women from it. Aristotle here arose to encourage the belief in empire; second nature must be reformed by first.

(v)

We are still without a comprehensive or unified account of the growth of stadial histories in west European social theory; at present it bears the appearance of a multiple and consensual process, in which many took part for many reasons, not necessarily knowing how their speculations might come together. The Spanish need to schematise the strange multiplicity of American societies was one of these enterprises, and its role in shaping others could be further investigated. What needs emphasising, however, is that the stadial sequences shaped in Europe – some derived from Greco-Roman antiquity – were designed to meet European (including British) needs and dealt with European phenomena. It is important to the study

of 'barbarism' and 'savagery' that the schemes existing by the eighteenth century were effective in explaining Eurasian history, but failed to provide a history of ancient America, with the result that it became marginalised or alienated. To understand this, we must consider how the stages through which society had passed were shaped in the Old World and failed to fit the New.

We have reached a point where humans in the theoretical 'state of nature' could be identified with Americans, with 'savages' and with hunters. This came about because the rights of men in civil society were increasingly identified with property – there is this much substance in the thesis of possessive individualism – and therefore with appropriation. The state of nature – of negative community in the earth as wilderness – was a means of describing appropriation by supposing a time when it was not; a time not described in either biblical or mythical history, though capable of being identified with moments in one or the other. It was accidental, though at the same time crucial, that the scheme also furnished a means of accounting for 'savage' society at a moment when English and French settlement in North America was leading to encounters with hunting peoples that supplemented a literature previously Spanish. It was this that led to the formation of the concepts famously systematised by John Locke, in a thesis that has been considered fundamental to the process of expropriating indigenous peoples.[25]

Locke – who was promoting the colonisation of Carolina as well as the dissolution of government in England – erected a developmental rather than a static account of the state of nature, in which humans were in the first instance hunters, roaming the wilderness in search of food. It should be noted that this was a natural, rather than a biblical account of history; *Genesis* has little account of a hunting stage, still less of a Cyclopean savagery. The hunting stage preceded appropriation of the earth, but not of property itself; 'the deer is that Indian's who hath killed it',[26] but the Indian has no property in the earth over which he passes without mixing his labour with it. These propositions were to be a foundation (clearly not the only one) of many subsequent arguments to the effect that cultivators, who made the earth both their property and the source of goods it produced, acquired rights and constructed laws to which hunting peoples must give way, becoming an external or internal proletariat to the society founded in agriculture. Arguments to this effect went on into the nineteenth

[25] Tully, 1993a, 1993b, 1995.
[26] *Second Treatise*, §30; Laslett, 1960, p. 289.

century – notably in the secondary New World discovered by James Cook – and were not extinct at the end of the twentieth. Even in the eighteenth century, however, questions were being raised about the rights the Indian might derive from the ground over which he hunted the deer; it was discovered, during the wars between English and French settlers, that Iroquoian leaders displayed the arts of oratory, statecraft and even government in the wars they conducted between themselves over hunting-grounds,[27] and these wars could be recognised as just.[28] There were some moments when it was recognised that appropriation and cultivation were not the only sources of an ancestral and natural relation with the earth; but we have to deal with a history in which such relations stood little chance of competing with the deep and complex jurisprudence alleged by expanding agriculturalists.

The appropriation of land was also the source of commerce. Locke's state of nature leaves room for the establishment and expansion of peasant societies, in which occupation and cultivation generate rights and other social norms and virtues, and there is recognition of a law of nature, which, however, the non-existence of government leaves every proprietor free, and at the same time obliged, to enforce by his own efforts and those of his neighbours. The exchange of surplus produce has begun and will expand as the earth becomes increasingly settled; but it will be the moment of a later stage of development when these exchanges are extended to a distance at which they can no longer be conducted by face-to-face dealings between buyers and sellers, and entail the use of a medium of exchange, monetary and metallic. The use of money compels the growth of government, a set of institutions for the conduct of human relationships at a distance greater than human individuals can manage for themselves; there occur territorialisation, institutionalisation, depersonalisation and alienation; in erecting laws and governments humans seek to retain possession of rights they no longer administer by direct personal action. Their rights recede to a distance whose foreground is occupied by the innumerable material and moral relationships made possible by commerce and familiar to us under the Enlightened names of 'manners' and 'politeness'. Following laws, said Goguet, the arts and sciences appear; without money and letters, said Gibbon, humans cannot act at a distance in either space or time, and are condemned to a life of savagery with neither memory nor history.[29] It was

[27] Colden, 1747.

[28] Pownall, 1768, pp. 259–60n., 260–80. See pp. 254–5, for the division of humanity into three races, white, red and black, to which 'the author of the books of Moses may refer when he gives precisely and only three sons to Noah'. Pownall does not identify these sons by their pigmentations.

[29] Above, pp. 53–4 (Goguet), 39, 79 (Gibbon).

something of a minority opinion that the human imagination could operate sociably under pre-commercial 'savage' conditions.

We may look back, at this point, to the thesis advanced by Acosta and other students of American 'barbarism', to the effect that language could develop to levels of rationality only in cities and empires where society was large enough to multiply human contacts and enhance the linguistic means of dealing with them in speech or writing. This contention is pressed further by Goguet, Gibbon and their contemporaries, in a conceptual universe perhaps more Lockean than Aristotelian. Only as human societies become settled and stationary, and begin to produce commodities which they exchange with one another, do they begin to need names for a multitude of things, goods and relations between men in society. This perception, in which we may see a starting point for subsequent doctrines of historical materialism, is based on the presumption that ideas originate as names for things perceived by the senses. Appropriation, production and exchange were necessary preconditions of the growth of language, rhetoric and systematic reasoning, and without them the savage might be reduced to grunting the names of things not grouped in order. Carte and Macpherson, however, remind us that imagination and poesy might function independently of this process;[30] perhaps the savage lacked not an imagination but the means of ordering it.

The stadial theories we see emerging[31] were histories of culture as well as of law, government and (in so far as it was conceived of independently) economy; but they tied all these sequences to an increasingly specific history of appropriation, moving from savagery and the state of nature to agriculture and urbanisation in their inescapably European forms. In English America, the savage conceived as hunter directly confronted the advancing settler, breaking land, building towns and establishing laws and authorities; but in European theory there came to be established between hunter and farmer an intermediate stage, that of the shepherd. In what ways this was rooted in European experience has not been much studied; we may speculate on encounters between agriculture and pasture interior to European kingdoms or along the Anglo-Gaelic frontier; but in the history of ideas we can see that the image of the shepherd, rooted in ancient conjectural histories, was valuable to social theorists in at least two ways. We have traced how it furthered an account of European and Eurasian history as the interaction between settled empires and nomad pastoralists and 'barbarians'; at the

[30] Above, pp. 69–70.

[31] For a Pufendorfian origin to stadial theory, see Hont, 1987. Meek, 1976, is now somewhat outdated but remains a pioneer work on this subject.

level of social theory proper it was interesting as offering an appropriation of animals preceding that of land. It was Adam Smith's originality – or so it would seem – that he identified the shepherd stage as the beginnings of the historical dynamic; whereas for Goguet and apparently for Gibbon, the shepherd was still a savage, vagrant rather than stationary, not yet contemplating the exchange of goods and ideas or organising it through money and letters. There remains something enigmatic about the introduction of this stage, of such crucial importance in differentiating the barbarian from the savage and Eurasia from Euroamerica.

(VI)

The encounters of the European intellect with the American New World form a vast, rich and often terrible history, about which there now exists a copious historiography. This series of volumes is concerned with the history of history-writing in late Enlightened but pre-Revolutionary western Europe, and its subject here is coming to be how European historians were unable to construct either a philosophical or a civil history of the New World that could be integrated with those they were constructing of the Old (even, though marginally, including the history of China). The re-invention of the savage state, and the relegation of nearly all American societies to that condition, is an integral part of that story, and we have begun to see how the development of a shepherd stage, and the definition of the savage as the hunter preceding the shepherd, figure in it. To carry the narrative to the point where the contemporaries of Gibbon appear in it, we shall consider how the New World appeared in the light of a four-stages theory, though it needs to be emphasised that this theory had only lately reached the degree of completeness it possesses in the writings of Adam Smith, and that the construction of an image or images of the New World antedated it. Spanish thought on this subject had been, and possibly still was, Aristotelian and Thomist in character; and it is not to be forgotten that there persisted an almost all-powerful impulse to depict native Americans as savage or barbarous, simply to the end of justifying European rule, or more often expropriation and extermination. It can be shown, however, that even had European theorists been in perfect good faith, the difficulties of understanding New World societies were great and would have been hard to overcome. Our subject is the history of historiography, and we are about to study an episode in which a world that could not be included in history was relegated to an antihistorical universe called 'nature', and the latter employed in the criticism of history itself.

To pursue this story, it is convenient to start – and it can be shown that contemporaries started or attempted to start – from the four-stages theory at its fullest development. We have seen how earlier versions of this theory could be used in developing a philosophical history of the Old World, reaching from the inner Asian frontiers of Rome to those of China, and building upon the equation of the shepherd stage in theory with the central Asian nomads in history, to produce a scheme – with Mosaic and Noachic foundations – in which Europe had been settled by shepherds and barbarians, hunting and savage peoples playing no recorded part. In the New World, however, this stadial scheme simply did not apply, and served rather to exclude the two continents from the 'progress' of society and *l'esprit humain* than to include them in it. No phase of herding or pasturage could be found and the word 'horde' seems to have been little applied; the 'shepherd stage' seemed to be lacking. In northern Scandinavia the Lapps were held to have appropriated the herds of reindeer and begun directing them from one feeding-ground to another; in northern Canada, the Inuit and Athabascan peoples were perceived as merely following the migrating caribou in the symbiotic role of hunters. On the Great Plains, now being explored, the cultures which had recently adopted the horse were similarly perceived as hunting the buffalo and certainly not directing the herds towards selected, still less enclosed, pastures. When Edmund Burke imagined the growth of an American nomadism beyond the frontiers of settlement, he saw it as composed of 'English Tartars'[32] and woefully under-anticipated the power of fences to parcel out the plains or the plough to break them. The point, however, was that pre-European Americans had developed neither pasture nor parklands, and that this was perceived as negative, denoting that they had not done something. Sympathisers, real or apparent, might defend, and importantly sentimentalise, their right to remain hunters if they chose, but there was a price to be paid; the Mohican or the Araucanian must remain at best a 'noble' savage.

The non-domestication of hoofed mammals had a further negative consequence. It came to be debated whether there were any American mammals capable of being harnessed in traction; if there were not, the problem was environmental rather than cultural; but the fact remained that animal traction was not to be found in the Americas, the Andean llama being only a pack-animal. There followed two non-events: the absence of the wheel and of the plough. Of the two it was the latter that was fundamental. The wheel was for chariots in war and wagons in peace; the wagons were for

[32] *Speech on Conciliation with the Colonies*; Canavan, 1999, p. 247.

use in storage and commerce, the exploitation of the surpluses which agriculture produced regularly and hunting – it was thought – hardly ever. But to the European, agriculture meant the plough, drawn by oxen or horses, and turning the earth far more effectively than the hoe in the hands of a human. It was of absolutely central importance that this complex implement did more even than increase surplus production; as it cultivated it appropriated, marking off one man's lands (or his lord's) from those of his neighbour, and creating the visible and definable property which was the foundation of law and society, liberty and possessive individualism. As we have seen in stadial theories preceding Smith's, tillage and commerce, the field and the town, were independent and went together to a point where it is hard to distinguish between a third and a fourth stage in the sequence.[33] The invention of money, in Locke's scheme, only extended the reach of the plough.

Europeans failed to discern – they had of course an interest in failing to discern – this sequence of stages anywhere in the Americas. We are, needless to say, looking at a process whereby peoples practising arable cultivation, and carrying on the Neolithic conversion of grass into grain, imposed a conceptual dictatorship on the rest of the planet, judging all other peoples by their understanding of themselves. There were of course other modes of producing vegetable food-stuffs – in this, though not an exact etymological sense, other modes of agriculture – and we may ask what these were, before ascertaining how Europeans perceived them. We have noted in passing de Guignes's observation that the Chinese discovered how to cultivate by irrigating the soil rather than by turning it;[34] the European question would be whether this led to the legalisation and individualisation of tenure, or to the 'hydraulic despotism' of twentieth-century theorists.[35] Similar questions could be asked regarding either the actuality or the imagery of the cultivation of maize – 'corn' as distinct from 'wheat' in American parlance – especially by the city and road-building empires of Mexico and Peru. It came to be argued, however, that these empires were not true civilisations because they did not practise commerce and had not developed a medium of exchange – 'money', we remember, ranked with 'letters' as a distinction between the civilised man and the savage. Lastly, there is record of Europeans noting that American, and later Oceanic and African, villagers grew fruit, vegetables and even cereals in gardens as distinct from fields, so that there might be a 'horticultural' stage as well as an 'agricultural'.

[33] I owe this point to Maria Luisa Pesante; there is no fourth stage until land becomes purely a commodity.

[34] Above, pp. 120–1. [35] Wittfogel, 1990.

A common response, however, was that in hunting societies this kind of labour was left to the women, and was evidence of their servile status.[36] It was only when man put his hand to the plough that his labour came to be mixed with the soil, and property and civilisation could develop.

There was, then, no way of enrolling pre-European America in the historical narrative which led from the state of nature, or the state of savagery, through the shepherd stage to agriculture, commerce, the growth of laws, arts and sciences, and the current conditions of sociability and politeness. At this point it is a temptation to launch into a criticism of the Eurocentricity that led historians and philosophers into a failure to develop alternative histories of society; but here we must distinguish between the cases of China, where there was a settled and ancient civilised empire, and America, where it was debatable whether the overthrown systems of Peru and Mexico qualified as empires of a comparable order. Enlightened history and theory found it difficult to account for the former; in the latter case, they did not find it necessary to suppose that they had a comparable problem. It was hard not to suppose that America lacked a history of civilisation, and therefore did not challenge the conceptual tools which Europeans had developed, with great difficulty and at correspondingly high levels of complexity, to explain history and civilisation to themselves.

The alternative demand which we can make on our Enlightened predecessors, and on ourselves, is for a recognition that all human cultures are morally equivalent, in the sense that they all grow out of the experience of the societies among whom they develop, and give comparable imaginative and moral satisfaction to those living in them.[37] The savage is the moral equal of the civilised man, we say, and therefore ought not to be described as savage at all. In Gibbon's time, but apparently unknown to him, Johann Gottfried Herder was working out something along these lines, on the presumption that every culture was produced by itself and that the proper meaning of the term 'history' was the multitude of processes through which these self-creations had been and were still being conducted. Enlightened thought, being overmasteringly concerned with settled and civilised order, defined history as the process by which civilisation was produced, and since the growth and the vocabulary of this concern were deeply rooted in European history, defined both civilisation and history in deeply European terms. Neither China, where there was a rich historical literature, nor Peru, where history and literacy were harder to discover, furnished a

[36] For the literature on women in Scottish stadial theory see Moran, 1999, and p. 197, n. 28, below.
[37] For this, most recently, see Muthu, 2003.

vocabulary that challenged European philosophical history. It is not clear that an alternative history has emerged yet.

In ensuing chapters there will emerge a discourse capable of presenting the savage as the moral (or anti-moral) equivalent of the civilised man, based in part on the ancient premise that it is as well to have no needs as to be capable of satisfying them. This will not be a proposition advanced by historians about history or within history, but rather one which established 'history' as a philosophically defined condition to which there can be challenges and alternatives. The 'savage' appears as one living outside history, challenging the civilised man with the assertion that he is comparably happy or even happier, because he is happy in a different way. The noble or innocent savage is equated with the natural man, and the state of nature ceases to be a self-abolishing precondition of human life, and becomes the normal condition in which most humans have existed. There now arises a dialectic, in which to have left the state of nature for that of history is presented as both good and not good. How this came about in philosophy, with Rousseau as its prophet or anti-prophet, is well enough known, but the history or non-history of America continues to contribute to it.

(VII)

Valuable recent work[38] has presented the history of Enlightened historiography on ancient and modern America as a sudden and unexpected episode, in which historians from cultures north of the Pyrenees intruded upon a set of complex intellectual relationships between Spanish and Spanish American scholars and ideologues. The intruders are reduced, as they were in the late eighteenth century itself, to three names: Cornelius de Pauw, William Robertson and the Abbé Raynal (the last named standing for the whole team of writers working with or for him). The first of these three was a Dutchman, at one time employed by Frederick of Prussia, and he is remembered for a series of works linked by their titles: the *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains* (1768–9), the *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois* (1773) and the *Recherches philosophiques sur les Grecs* (1787), all of which were owned by Gibbon.[39] De Pauw displays throughout a vigorous scepticism about ancient civilisations and their historians; the second work listed is directed against Joseph de Guignes's beliefs about Chinese origins, and against the image of China as a high and enlightened

[38] Pagden, 1990, chs. 4, 5; Brading, 1990, chs. 19, 20; Cañizares, 2001.
[39] Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1249. Echevarria, 1957, pp. 4, 9–15.

civilisation. It is the *Recherches sur les Américains* which concerns our enquiry into the historiography of savagery. De Pauw popularised if he did not originate two theses: the first that Incas and Aztecs had not established civilised empires, and that the tale that they had was a Spanish invention; second, that the American continents were a new in the sense of a geophysically young world, insufficiently formed and drained, and prey to a climate which inhibited vegetable, animal and human growth, and confined them to monstrous and stunted forms. To Christian or scholastic writers – there were still plenty of both – it must seem that de Pauw's 'philosophic researches' were designed to undo the entire Spanish enterprise of bringing the Americans into the scriptural and Aristotelian universe, and were doubtless intended to undermine the latter. If this was Enlightenment – the supposition is anachronistic, since the term had yet to be invented – its critical modernity was deeply reactionary, and aimed at relegating half of the planet to an alien and alienated universe.

De Pauw's climatic theories made him a protagonist in the 'debate on the New World',[40] whose history is a narrative in its own right. His refusal to accept Peru and Mexico as ancient civilisations is a distinguishable though never a separate issue. We have seen that the absence of pastoral or arable economies and cultures rendered European stadial theories inapplicable to the Americas, and the Americas in consequence an anomaly in history as Europeans understood it; without shepherds or ploughmen, it was fatally easy to relegate all American societies to the 'savage' stage that was all that remained of the stadial scheme, supposing them to be hunters, foodgatherers or primitive planters and gardeners who had not developed agriculture to the point where it generated commerce and the state. In both continents, Europeans encountered many cultures it was persuasive to imagine in these terms, and it may be questioned how far we alter the ethnographic situation when we re-baptise 'savage' societies by the more dignified term 'indigenous'. De Pauw pioneered what Robertson and Raynal developed as a new kind of historiography: one narrating the encounter between Europeans and a vast variety of peoples living in a condition to which the term 'history' might not be applicable at all. It was for this reason that Robertson had decided that the discovery and conquest of America, while world-altering phenomena of the reign of Charles V, could not be written into the history of that reign in Europe.[41]

[40] Gerbi, 1955, 1978. All these secondary works should be consulted for the independent but crucial role of Buffon; Gerbi, 1978, chs. 1, 3.

[41] NCG, p. 277.

After Momigliano's formula itself, we have supposed essential to the understanding of Enlightened historiography the relation between philosophical history and civil. The part-realised confrontation between d'Alembert and the young Gibbon introduced us to the thought that a history of society based on the workings of the human mind alone, and therefore consisting of a series of ideal types, looked very different when the mind's workings were mediated, as in a real world they must be, through the contingencies of circumstance and the unpredictabilities of human behaviour. The former were to be met with in the domains of climate and custom; antiquarian and philological research had laid bare in many layers the past states of law and language, economy and culture, law and religion, the fruits of circumstance and experience; there was the possibility of a narrative of how these past states had succeeded to one another. This history was the context of a persistently neo-classical narrative of human actions in war, statecraft and the confrontation with God; and thanks particularly to Tacitus, it was possible to see the rise and fall of systems of government as the history of political conditions in which humans could or could not act as reason and nature directed them. What Kant was to call 'the crooked timber of humanity',[42] never to be quite straightened by philosophy, was the subject of history and the theme of the historian.

This was the matter of civil history, which philosophical history, the natural history of the human mind, could profoundly illuminate but never quite replace; the philosophical historian, it followed, was one who knew this and could narrate the interactions of the two. It followed further, however, that civil history was possible only in civil society, when humans had erected for themselves systems of law and liberty, codes directing and evaluating action, to which human behaviour might or might not succeed in conforming. This was the matter of historiography both judgmental and ironic; but the question now arose at which of the successive stages of social development historiography and history itself became possible. It might very well be that history appeared and could be written only when production and exchange made humans capable of action at a distance; without letters and money, thought Gibbon, they could neither act publicly nor remember their actions, and could be no more than a herd of savages. But philosophical, natural and conjectural history came into play where civil history failed, and furnished narratives of how the successive states of

[42] A favourite quotation of Isaiah Berlin's (Berlin, 1998, p. xv) and the title of one of his books (Berlin, 1990).

society had come into being and passed away; the *peinture de ce qu'il a été* was possible when the *récit de ce qu'il a fait* was not.

In pastoral and nomadic society there could be ballads, war songs and epics, in which the diversities of character and action could be displayed with real sophistication. It was nevertheless true, as Machiavelli had pointed out, that migrating barbarians were bodies of custom on the march,[43] and overthrew the systems they encountered by what they were as much as by what they did. Savages were seldom migrants or conquerors, more probably victims than victors, and *peinture* might be the only possible means of portraying them where there could be no *récit* of their actions. The ancient peoples of America were very easily differentiated into a diversity of savage societies and a very few barbarous empires, and the process set going by de Pauw amounted to the elimination of the latter. The enquiry whether the Inca and Aztec systems had been empires became an enquiry whether they had possessed civil histories or the linguistic and literary means of recording them.

Cornelius de Pauw – of whom no detailed study appears to exist in English – may be thought of as pioneering, or at least energetically promoting, first, the geophysical and climatological 'debate on the New World', with its implications for a supposed American failure to advance beyond the savage condition; second, what has been described as a 'new way of reading',[44] which studied history and its modern equivalent, the reports of travellers, solely with a view to uncovering the truths of philosophical history, and did not hesitate to reject historians and travellers when their reports seemed inconsonant with the latter. It is certain that de Pauw, Robertson and Raynal were capable of rejecting the accounts given by conquistadors and creoles of Andean and Mexican empires on the grounds that these were philosophically impossible; but it cannot be said of Robertson that he was self-imprisoned within a 'new way of reading' and interested in history only in so far as it revealed the laws of human nature or of social development. He has been studied at length in a previous volume, and in the writings of others,[45] as the author of a great 'Enlightened narrative' of European history between the fall of the western empire and the accession of Charles V; and this philosophical history was the prelude to a humanist civil history of Charles's reign, greatly exceeding his *View of the Progress of Society* in length and narrative detail, if not in philosophical content. When he decided that the discovery and conquest of

[43] FDF, pp. 227–9. [44] Cañizares, 2001, ch. 1.
[45] NCG, section IV; O'Brien, 1997; Brown, 1997; Francesconi, 2003, ch. VI.

a New World could not be included in such a history, therefore, it cannot have been because he had lost interest in civil history or desired to subordinate it to philosophical; we know that he was concerned with the antiquarian research and critical apparatus necessary to connect the two. What had happened was that he had become convinced that no civil history of pre-Columbian America could be written, because no such history existed or had been transacted; Europeans had a civil history, Americans had none, and a philosophical history of the latter must be written before it was possible to relate the civil history the former had brought with them – the civil history of Europeans in America and of America in Europe.

It is at this point that the history of Robertson's *History* becomes disputable, because it is unclear how far he knew, or was willing to admit, that he had met with a historiography in which it was energetically maintained that the ancient empires of America had transacted a history and had possessed languages and means of recording them in monuments and codices, *inscriptions et belles lettres*, in which it was possible for Europeans and settlers to read their civil history.[46] It was this contention, as we shall see, that made the reception of Robertson's *History of America* the occasion of vehement debate in Spain, New Spain and Granada; but it is possible to doubt how far he recognised that this was the thesis he must confront. As an Edinburgh Moderate and a friend of the Glasgow professors, he was well acquainted with the stadial theories he had rather taken for granted than directly employed in his history of Europe, and together with what he learned from sixteenth-century Spanish sources, these supplied him with the list of prerequisites that must be met before civil history, civilisation and empire, could be said to exist. We shall see that he deployed this list: pasture, agriculture and commerce, the wheel and the plough, ferrous metallurgy, money (why had a culture skilled in working gold and silver not used them as a medium of exchange?) and letters – could pictograms and calendars be considered the equivalent of an alphabetic script? The last of these was to prove the most controversial; but the list as a whole had possessed negative implications, which we may consider either predictable or problematical. Each one was put forward as a precondition of civility, empire and history, and each, until the last, was not to be found in ancient America. There is no need to choose between saying that Europeans were genuinely puzzled by their absence and saying that Europeans employed their absence as justifying their rule over Americans; both are true. Robertson set forth

[46] Cañizares, 2001, chs. 2, 4.

this absence and proceeded to enquire whether – he would have been an even greater historian if he had asked how – empire and civility had been possible without them.

These were not problems of central importance elsewhere in the European conquest of the global oceans. In Islam, India and China there were ancient literate empires capable of expressing themselves in written philosophies and histories which Europeans could recognise if they could not properly understand. There arose myths of orientalism depicting these civilisations as incapable of change, liberty or (when the term appeared) modernity; but in the New World 'the rhythm was different.'[47] Peru and Mexico (later Yucatan) were the exceptions to the rule that the Americas were inhabited by societies, 'savage' or 'indigenous', between which and the empires there were no intermediate forms interacting to provide a history (as the nomads did with China); eliminate the exceptions, and the two continents were exclusively inhabited by cultures intelligible in natural philosophy, but never in civil history of their own making or recounting. But the natural world was by now ancient. Both Iberian America and the very different French and English north had been invaded, as had the islands, by European settlers (and their imported slaves) whose history – if they had one and Europeans were capable of recognising it – must be their own. Robertson and Raynal both wrote at a time when relations between colonial and metropolitan Europeans were becoming critical and even revolutionary, as were the relations in the books they wrote between the prehistory of savage nature and the civil history of the seaborne empires.

[47] Venturi, 1971, p. 132; EEG, pp. 293–4.

CHAPTER 10

Robertson's America*: the Scottish theoretical encounter with the New World*

(1)

William Robertson's *History of America* appeared in 1777, a full year later than the first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. It is studied here, first because it shows how the Scottish manner of writing philosophical history, already displayed in Robertson's *History of Charles V*, to which Gibbon was much indebted, could relegate pre-colonial America to a 'savage' condition, of which there could be a philosophical history but not a civil; second because we can learn from its composition and reception how this treatment of America, which occasioned intense debate in Spain and the Spanish colonies, was caught up in a crisis affecting the relations between European kingdoms and their American dependencies, from which resulted revolutions in British America in the 1770s and Spanish America half a century later. Enlightened historiography played its part in this crisis and was affected by it. Gibbon wrote the first three volumes of the *Decline and Fall* while serving in Parliament during the War of the American Revolution; and when we look beyond the *History of America* to Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique du commerce et des établissements des Européens dans les deux Indes*, we move beyond the problem of American savagery and the debate on the New World to a philosophical history of Europe and the world in the age of the seaborne empires which challenges comparison with the *Decline and Fall* itself. The *History of America* joins the *Histoire des deux Indes* – profoundly as the two differ in their understanding of history and historiography – in making and presenting the intellectual climate of the War of the American Revolution and 'the first crisis of the Ancien Regime'.[1] That crisis affected the completion of the *Histoire des deux Indes* and prevented the *History of America* from being completed at all; and though Gibbon's writing was not directly affected by a crisis that was not part of its

[1] Venturi, 1979; Litchfield, 1989.

subject, he lived and wrote in its climate while completing the first three of his six volumes. We do not yet know what relations there may be between his book and this context.

The *History of America* belongs with, if not to, the *History of Charles V* eight years earlier, in the sense that it had been deliberately set aside from the latter as a project to be completed separately. The encounter with a new world and its peoples was too vast and strange a subject to be written together with the history of Europe, Robertson had decided. He faced a problem in the incompatibility of narratives; and when we criticise the exclusion of extra-European peoples from European historical narrative, we may be saying less that history should have been written differently than that it should not have occurred at all. Robertson, however, considered that he had made an engagement with 'the Public with respect to the History of America',[2] and proceeded in such a way as to show that he considered the encounter with America to be part not merely of the history of Charles V and his empire, or of Europe in the years of Charles's reign, but of the history of Europe as an entity developing in the history of civil society. To write that, however, was not to write the history of Americans as belonging to history in the last sense; it remained to be seen whether, and if so how, this could be done.

It is also clear that Robertson had intended a comprehensive history of the impact of Europe on America, so that 'America' appeared throughout as the subject of conquest and colonisation. It was not to have been limited to the history of Spanish empire, but to have extended to that of the British colonies, 'together with the History of Portuguese America, and of the settlements made by the several nations of Europe in the West India islands'.[3] The last theme must clearly have included the French, and though Robertson does not here mention any plan to treat the history of Canada or Louisiana, we are looking at a sketch of something as comprehensive as Raynal's volumes on the New World, though planned on different principles and in quite another spirit. It remains forever unfinished:

> it was my intention not to have published any part of the work until the whole was completed. The present state of the British colonies has induced me to alter that resolution. While they are engaged in civil war with Great Britain, inquiries and speculations concerning their ancient forms of policy and law, which exist no longer, cannot be interesting. The attention and expectation of mankind are now turned toward their future condition. In whatever manner this unhappy contest may terminate, a new order of things must arise in North America and its affairs

[2] *Works*, VI, p. 3. [3] Ibid.

will assume another aspect. I wait with the solicitude of a good citizen, until the ferment subside, and regular government be re-established, and then I shall return to this part of my work, in which I have made some progress.[4]

A civil war is not the same as a war of independence; but whatever Robertson's sympathies may have been, he is certain that the revolt of the colonies is a revolutionary event, which must change all institutions and bring 'a new order of things', so that 'regular government' cannot be re-established in its ancient form. History should not be written during a civil war which must transform its subject; Robertson exercises an option to abstain from writing denied his seventeenth-century (even his Roman) predecessors, who felt obliged to write while the storm was still going on, and since he lived till 1793 we have not yet been told why he never resumed his work. If, as has been suggested, the *History of America* is Robertson's masterpiece,[5] it is only in part freed from the marble.

The *History*'s character as a master work derives from its construction. What we have of it consists of three volumes, recounting the European discovery of the New World, and the Spanish conquests of Mexico and Peru. This, says Robertson, is both the most 'splendid' part of 'the American story' and the most self-contained since the 'principles and maxims' of Spanish colonisation have been 'adopted in some measure' by every European nation in the Americas, and their history may serve to introduce that of the others.[6] The introduction is complete by itself, though the work as a whole remains unwritten. Robertson's preface proceeds, with a conscious awareness of the novelty of what he is doing:

> I have departed, in many instances, from the accounts of preceding historians, and have often related facts which seem to have been unknown to them.[7]

This is because he can claim to have been doing original research, and his history is not a mere formal exercise in re-narration. This research, however, has been carried out at a distance and through the agency and mediation of others. Robertson proceeds to thank those – in particular Mr Waddilove, the chaplain of the British embassy in Madrid – who have procured for him an imposing collection of Spanish books and manuscripts of the sixteenth century and later, which have supplemented both the deficiencies of the main narratives he has to follow, and the impossible labour of doing research at Simancas.[8] These are described in detail, but from the reports of

[4] Ibid.
[5] Phillipson, 1996. The fullest studies of the *History* are Smitten, 1985, 1990, 1997; Armitage, 1995; Phillipson, 1996, 1997; Lenman, 1997; O'Brien, 1997, chs. 4, 5; Francesconi, 2003, pp. 215–22.
[6] *Works*, VI, pp. 3–4. [7] Ibid. VI, p. 4. [8] Ibid. VI, pp. 4–6.

others; the problem of Spanish history is part of the literature of travel. The obstructiveness of the Spaniards, making their archives inaccessible, is contrasted with the generosity of the empresses Maria Theresa and Catherine in making Austrian and Russian sources available;[9] the history of Russian exploration in the Aleutian islands and Alaska is to form part of Robertson's work. It is for his success in developing a Spanish bibliography that he is most grateful to his assistants, and he proceeds to give an eleven-page catalogue of the Spanish works he has consulted.[10] We are at an interesting point between the literature of European erudition – that *apparatus criticus* which in the *History of Charles V* he had chidden Voltaire for refusing to supply – and the nineteenth-century sense that historiography depended on the opening of the archives of European states; and in explaining his decision to list his sources in detail, Robertson says that he is following a 'hint' from

> an author, whom his industry, erudition, and discernment, have deservedly placed in a high rank among the most eminent historians of the age.[11]

This author is identified as Gibbon, who indeed meditated a supplementary volume of the *Decline and Fall* setting out and commenting on all the sources and authors he had used. Since he was concerned with a remote ancient and medieval past, recorded in enormous variety, his case differed from Robertson's history of recent discovery and exploration, and this reference shows not only that Gibbon and Robertson were working in contact with each other, but that ancient and modern historiography were joining in a rapid development of their post-classical character. Robertson did not consider what he was doing new in itself; he says that 'this practice was frequent in the last century... In the present, it may, perhaps be deemed the effect of ostentation';[12] but the reasons for doing it were in part new, and included both the growth of a neo-classical 'philosophy' which deemed erudition ostentatious, and the development of an erudition in the field of New World studies itself. In a note to his preface added ten years later, Robertson responded to the rather vigorous criticisms of his history by Francisco Clavijero.[13] There existed in fact a copious literature, clerical and baroque in character, produced by and in New Spain as well as Old, of which it was and is felt that the Enlightened writers Raynal and

[9] Ibid. VI, pp. 6–8. The passage does not suggest that Robertson saw himself as working on the Spanish behalf.
[10] Ibid. VI, pp. 14–25. [11] Ibid. VI, p. 10. [12] Ibid. p. 10.
[13] Ibid. VI, pp. 11–12. Robertson and most non-Spanish writers use the spelling 'Clavigero', derived from the publication of his work in Italian.

Robertson did not take sufficient account;[14] and Robertson's erudition is not only philosophical and innovative, but a defence of his work against attacks on behalf of an older and highly effective scholarship. The preface to the *History of America*, especially its later editions, located it in a complex history of historiography, to which we must return in a later chapter.

This history, then, is to be critical and authoritative in a way that Raynal's was not. There are notes appended to it as full and detailed as those in the *History of Charles V*, of which the Spanish volumes at least had always been visualised as an extension. The first of the eight books into which they are divided presents the oceanic discoveries at the end of the fifteenth century as an aspect of 'the progress of society in Europe'. As the system of states of whose growth the *History of Charles V* was an account takes shape, their acquisition of a capacity for navigation is necessary to the growth of their commerce and civilisation, but brings them into catastrophic contact with cultures outside Europe. The first book is a narrative of Portuguese experiments in compass sailing along the western coasts of Africa, which carries them both towards the great circumnavigation and west into oceanic waters as far as the Canaries and Madeira, thus opening the way for Columbus's leap across the Atlantic. This radical happening is a diversion from a narrative which has carried the Portuguese as far as the Cape of Good Hope but not round it; thereafter the voyages of da Gama to Calicut and of Cabral to an accidental sighting of the coast of Brazil are interruptions of a narrative focused on the Spaniards and their New World, and the narrative of Portuguese empire is never renewed. The second book is the history of Columbus, depicted as a Renaissance figure engaged in new forms of thought, though not altogether to the exclusion of those medieval and messianic elements in his personality which scholarship in our own time tends to make central to his portrait; and the third book is very largely the history of Las Casas, his success in exposing and his failure in preventing the 'destruction of the Indies' produced by Spanish predatory exploitation of native labour – it is duly noted that Las Casas proposed the importation of African slaves as a substitute – to a point where Spaniards are in contact with the mainland of Yucatan and the second leap into the Mexican interior is in preparation. The story so far has been European; as well as the dynamic personalities necessary to historical narrative, we have encountered the strong, moral, unfeeling, profoundly jealous and ultimately stupid Castilian bureaucracy with which they interact – Columbus and Balboa in one way, Las Casas in another. But as the conquest proceeds

[14] Brading, 1990, especially chapter 19; Cañizares, 2001, pp. 170–203.

from the islands to the mainland the full encounter with the peoples of the two continents discloses itself, and the whole structure of the history is obliged to change.

(11)

At this point Robertson finds it necessary to employ the non-narrative, but 'philosophical', scheme of the four stages, which Smith knew to constitute a 'history' of a new kind, but which neither he nor Ferguson had employed in writing a history of the narrative order; Smith indeed had said that the two should not be combined.[15] In Robertson's narrative, the Spaniards, outrunning the Portuguese, had discovered a new world and embarked on its conquest. They were able to do this because they acted in certain ways, of which certain kinds of history could be written. They were, therefore, inhabitants of two kinds of history: first, the narrative of noteworthy actions, of which those of Las Casas as well as Columbus – and shortly Cortes – formed part; second, the progress of society in Europe, written by philosophers rather than historians but increasingly indicated by the noun 'history', and increasingly seen as prerequisite to the first, since moderns must live in a post-ecclesiastical civilisation if they were to enact or write history of the classical kind. The actions, and in these senses the history, of the Europeans were now bringing them into aggressive encounter with inhabitants of the New World, 'Indians' or 'Americans', who were unable to resist the Spaniards because they did not perform actions commensurate with theirs, or consequently inhabit a history – either of military-political action or of the progress of a states system in which such actions could be performed – capable of being written as that of the Spaniards could be. Since they lived – those of them so far encountered and by anticipation almost all American peoples except two – in small food-gathering and hunting societies, lacking the structure of government and the culture of horse, steel and gunpowder which made the Europeans formidable and enabled them to act in a history, it was easy to describe them as 'savages'. Whatever this epithet had meant in the great debates of the Spanish jurists, Robertson was about to employ it as part of the vocabulary of Scottish stadial theory.

In this vocabulary it formed an essential part of the philosophy of the progress of society; we have seen how it was employed by Smith and Ferguson, and much of the information with which they illustrated it

[15] NCG, pp. 318–19, 325–9.

was derived from European accounts of American cultures. We have also seen, however, that while vital to the philosophy of 'the progress of society', it formed no part of the narrative of 'the progress of society in Europe', to employ Gibbon's significantly self-limiting term. The history of Europe began with shepherd barbarians, and the 'savage' condition was a preliminary to the 'progress of society' which only the dynamism of shepherd society could begin. Ferguson had depicted the co-existence of hunters and shepherds in central Asia – as Robertson certainly knew – in terms which could suggest that the former had gone east to America and the latter west to Europe. But this was only the beginning of the problem which Robertson now faced. The savage condition had actually existed in America, or so he found himself obliged to believe; and it had come in contact with the Spaniards, who had largely but not wholly destroyed it. The history of this encounter must therefore be written in two concurrently existing ways: first, the philosophic re-creation of classical narrative, which now entailed a philosophic narrative of the progress of society – it was a question whether these two narratives could be written into one another; second, a philosophically created natural history of society, depicting a condition in which the actions constituting classical narrative could not yet be performed and it was unclear how the narrative of the progress of society, which could be set in motion only by the dynamic acts of shepherd peoples, could begin. Robertson must initially face the problem of bringing two such disparate kinds of history together.

There are passages in the *History of America* where Robertson lets us see what it was in each way of writing history that most deeply engages his own intellect and imagination; and as he was by most accounts a cold and Olympian man, who liked to dominate conversation and was intolerant of argument, these moments of self-revelation are not unmoving. Concerning history in its classical sense he says:

> It is one of the noblest functions of history, to observe and to delineate men at a juncture when their minds are most violently agitated, and all their powers and passions are called forth. Hence the operations of war, and the struggles between contending states, have been deemed by historians, ancient as well as modern, a capital and important article in the annals of human actions. But in a contest between naked savages, and one of the most warlike of the European nations, where science, courage and discipline on one side, were opposed by ignorance, timidity and disorder on the other, a particular detail of events would be as unpleasant as uninstructive. If the simplicity and innocence of the Indians had inspired the Spaniards with humanity, had softened the pride of

superiority into compassion, and had induced them to improve the inhabitants of the New World, instead of oppressing them, some sudden acts of violence, like the rigorous chastisements of impatient instructors, might have been related without horror. But, unfortunately, this consciousness of superiority operated in a different manner.[16]

Because the warlike virtues possessed by the Spaniards are not opposed by virtues equal to them in the same kind, they do not develop to the point where their actions and passions are dramatised and worth relating. If in the absence of opponent equals, they had converted themselves into the complementary virtues of humane paternalism and clemency, this story would have been morally worth telling; Las Casas is a principal figure in the book of the *History* from which this passage is drawn. But a gang of conquistadors, cutting down a crowd of bewildered Americans and enslaving the survivors, offer a history which must be related but cannot be dramatised; and the uncomprehending innocence of the victims is a proximate cause of the uncomprehending brutality of the victors. The Indians do not stir the imaginations of the Spaniards, as barbarians might, by opposing them with virtues the complement of their own. If the conquistadors are unworthy of the history their civilisation has invented, we are on the way to seeing the 'simplicity and innocence' of the 'savages' as indicating that they have not entered history at all; not in Rousseau's or Diderot's sense that they have not entered upon the tensions between nature and society, but in the neo-classical and philosophical sense that they have not begun to 'call forth' the 'powers and passions' of the human mind.

There is a later passage in which Robertson tells us what it is he finds most deeply satisfying in 'history' of the philosophical kind, and at the same time indicates both how the *History of America* is to be organised around the two kinds of history and why he may never be able to bring its pre-Columbian inhabitants into history as Europeans understand it. After an attempt, to which we shall return, to establish the origin of the peoples inhabiting the two Americas, he says that their 'condition and character' is of more significance than their ethnic origin.

> The latter is merely an object of curiosity; the former is one of the most important as well as instructive researches which can occupy the philosopher or historian. In order to complete the history of the human mind –

the two concepts of 'philosopher' and 'historian' have still not quite come together –

[16] *Works*, VI, pp. 190–1.

we must contemplate man in all those various situations wherein he has been placed. We must follow him in his progress through the different stages of society, as he gradually advances from the infant state of civil life towards its maturity and decline.

Progress may still be cyclical rather than linear and open ended.

We must observe, at each period, how the faculties of his understanding unfold, we must attend to the efforts of his active powers, watch the various movements of desire and affection, as they rise in his breast, and mark whither they tend, and with what ardour they are exerted.

History is still a necessary ancillary to the science of moral philosophy.

The philosophers and historians of ancient Greece and Rome, our guides in this as well as every other disquisition, had only a limited view of this subject, as they had hardly any opportunity of surveying man in his rudest and most early state. In all those regions of the earth with which they were well acquainted, civil society had made considerable advances, and nations had finished a good part of their career before they began to observe them. The Scythians and Germans, the rudest people of whom any ancient author has transmitted us an authentic account, possessed flocks and herds, had acquired property of various kinds, and, when compared with mankind in their primitive state, may be reckoned to have attained to a great degree of civilisation.

But the discovery of the New World enlarged the sphere of contemplation, and presented nations to our view, in stages of their progress, much less advanced than those wherein they have been observed in our continent. In America, man appears under the rudest form in which we can conceive him to subsist. We behold communities just beginning to unite, and may examine the sentiments and actions of human beings in the infancy of social life, while they feel but imperfectly the force of its ties, and have scarcely relinquished their native liberty. That state of primæval simplicity, which was known in our continent only by the fanciful description of poets, really existed in the other. The greater part of its inhabitants were strangers to industry and labour, ignorant of arts, imperfectly acquainted with the nature of property, and enjoying almost without restriction or control the blessings which flowed spontaneously from the bounty of nature.[17]

There is a sense in which Europe is the prisoner of its shepherd and barbaric origins. The savage state cannot be discovered in its history, and has had to be invented, under the name of the state of nature, by poets, lawgivers and philosophers. In America the thing really exists, and the two continents form a vast laboratory in which European speculative experimenters can test their hypotheses regarding the human mind by observing it in a state as close as is possible for humans to the condition of frugivorous or

[17] *Works*, v1, pp. 285–6.

carnivorous animals. It is not impossible, therefore, that 'the state of nature' may prove a hypothesis which has to be modified or abandoned. But before a hypothesis can be criticised it must be assumed; and this is the point at which 'America' becomes the prisoner of 'Europe's' limited understanding of itself. The concept of a 'nature' preceding 'history' in the organisation of human social life, evolved in Europe, is about to be imposed upon America, as a means whereby 'Europe' understands both 'America' and itself; and given the radical inequalities of power between the two, the understanding and government of the self is very different from the understanding and government of the other. As represented by the Scottish philosophers, furthermore, 'Europe' has invented, and isolated, certain techniques – the domestication of animals, a metallurgy of cutting tools, an appropriative agriculture, a monetarised exchange, an alphabetic literacy – as constituting 'civilisation' and the move into it defined as 'history'; and it is about to be affirmed that since these presences are lacking in pre-Columbian America, the inhabitants of the latter must be defined as 'savages' in the sense that they have lived hitherto in 'nature' but not in 'history'. 'The progress of the human mind' is as near as possible to not having begun.

(111)

It is necessary, therefore, to read the *History of America* as a classical text of what we used to call 'imperialism' and presently term 'colonialism'. This term, however, though some equivalent for it is necessary, can be facile and crude in its applications, and we need to remember that the stages of 'the progress of society' had been invented to explain their history to Europeans themselves, as well as to assist them in the domination of others; when, why and whether these two ends became indistinguishable is matter of debate. In Robertson's case we have found that the supposed encounter between history and savagery brought to a head the problem, already and independently existing, of reconciling 'history' in the narrative sense with 'philosophy' in the historical, and we are now at a point where the organisation of the *History of America* can be fully perceived. The passage last quoted occurs in the fourth book. There have been three depicting how Europe in its progress embarked on oceanic navigation – the compass is a precondition of commerce and so of civilisation – and acquired the knowledge of (i.e. discovered) a new world extending from close to the north pole to somewhere approaching the south. The Pacific Ocean has been

sighted by Balboa and is about to be traversed by Magellan;[18] anticipating the historical narrative for the sake of geographical description, we now read of the explorations of British navigators in the Antarctic oceans and of Russian joined by British navigators in the Arctic between Kamschatka and Alaska.[19] Robertson now inserts his fourth book, philosophical rather than narrative, portraying 'savage' society and its place in the history the philosopher contemplates. There will follow a fifth and sixth, narrating the conquests of Mexico by Cortes and of Peru by Pizarro. Book VII explores the problem of fitting the exceptional cultures of the Aztec and Inca into the concept of civilisation in its European and Eurasian sense, and goes on to narrate the extension of Spanish rule into other American regions; these range northward to California and southward to the continent below La Plata, leaving Portuguese Brazil – whose history Robertson never reached – enclosed within a world otherwise Spanish,[20] though the Spaniards do not attempt to share Portuguese empire in the Indian Ocean.[21] The eighth and final book is a history of modern Spanish America, in its relation to the Habsburg decline and the prospect of better government under the Bourbons; we make contact with the history written by Giannone and Raynal, as well as by Robertson himself in his European works.

[18] Ibid. VI, pp. 209–17 (Balboa); VII, pp. 215–22 (Magellan). Robertson inserts his account of Magellan's voyage as a digression following the conquest of Mexico.
[19] Ibid. VI, pp. 260–2 and 276–80, and notes XXXIII, XLI–XLIII.
[20] Ibid. VI, pp. 166–7; VII, p. 66.
[21] Robertson commented on the policy of Spain after its union with Portugal in his much later *Historical Disquisition* on India; *Works*, IX, pp. 148–9.

CHAPTER II

The universe of savagery and the search for history

(I)

Apart from two posthumously published chapters on the histories of Virginia and New England,[1] this is all there is of Robertson's *History of America*; but this all is a great deal. The three volumes constitute a major achievement, and their structure alone is a step forward in the process of integrating narrative, philosophy and erudition. The alternation between narrative (Books II and III), philosophy (IV), narrative (V and VI) and philosophy (VII) admits the two modes of history to parity, while erudition and digression supply IV alone with sixty-nine measured endnotes.[2] This *History* may be said to stand between the *History of the Reign of Charles V*, with its introductory volume on the progress of society in barbaric and feudal Europe, and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, with its elaborate alternation between chapters of narrative and chapters of disquisition, and its footnotes used as (sometimes satiric) commentary where Robertson's supply only reference and authentication. If Gibbon, however, sets up a more complex relationship between the two major modes, it is because the gap between them is never so wide. Writing European and Eurasian history, he does not have to confront the image of the 'savage' in his pure state, or – as Robertson, Raynal and Diderot all do – confront an Old World which has a civil history with a New which may be capable only of a natural history. Robertson has to deal with the problem of the natural man – just as we have to ask whether this statement of the problem was not a huge miscarriage of the historical intelligence – and the necessity both enlarges and limits the role of his *History* in the formation of historiography.

It is Book IV, perhaps together with Book VII, which has proved most crucial in determining the reputation of the *History of America* and of

[1] Published by Robertson's son in *Works*, VIII, as Books IX and X, pp. 161–282.

[2] Ibid. VI, n. XXVIII–LIII; VII, n. I–XLIII. Book IV is divided between volumes VI and VII in the 1824 edition, and the notes are renumbered accordingly.

Robertson as historian, since it was here that he became involved in the 'debate on the new world' just as the various theses of American degeneracy were arousing serious opposition from Hispanic and Anglo-American writers as well as from dissentient *philosophes*. The most recent work on these matters validates the Jesuit and baroque historiography of creole Catholic culture, and shows how Robertson and Raynal appeared to stand beside Buffon and de Pauw in the light of the debate.[3] Robertson indeed has no good opinion of Spanish clerical scholarship, though he cites it extensively, but there is a passage in which he firmly separates himself from Buffon, for arguing that America is a new world literally and geophysically; from de Pauw, for maintaining the degeneracy of the human species in the islands and continents; and from Rousseau, for idealising the savage condition.[4] It is this condition which interests Robertson, and he wants to account for it by a mixture of climate and culture. More than once he insists that the human condition is so complex that no single cause can be adduced for any one of the situations in which we find it,[5] and a multi-causal condition is richly capable of producing anomalous and paradoxical effects. Climate, or a complex of geophysical conditions, must be considered first; and here the circumstance that the two continents extend from the arctic to the sub-antarctic exposes both to extensive irruptions of cold air, a violently oscillating climate, and a tropical zone which is humid instead of torrid.[6] As a result there are no black native Americans, in contrast to the belt of blackness which extends from Africa to Melanesia, differentiating its inhabitants from the variable whiteness of the rest of the human race;[7] in which generalisation Robertson appears to include the copper-coloured pigmentation of native Americans from north to south.[8] The uniformity of human type in both continents suggests a single origin, and Robertson goes in search of it, excepting the Inuit or 'Esquimaux', who appear to be a different stock and whose kinship with the people of Greenland suggests an origin in arctic Europe[9] (the brilliant dissentient Anquetil-Duperron was to contend that Inuit, Lapps, Samoyeds and Chukchi formed a single circumpolar physical type and culture which rendered all distinctions

[3] Brading, 1990; Cañizares, 2001. [4] *Works*, VI, pp. 289–90.
[5] Ibid. VI, pp. 295–6; VII, pp. 19, 87–8, 90–1.
[6] Ibid. VI, pp. 257–61 and notes XXX–XXXIII. Both cold and humidity are partly explained by the lack of human cultivation; clearance and drainage have power to alter the climate, and the savage is entrapped by conditions which he has not changed and which lessen his power to change it; pp. 263–4.
[7] Ibid. VI, pp. 300–1. Cf. Pownall, above, p. 169, proposing a 'white', 'black' and 'red' pigmental classification.
[8] *Works*, VI, pp. 283, 292, 300, 301. [9] Ibid. VI, pp. 282–304.

between Europe, Asia and America meaningless[10]). Russian navigators have established the possibility of communication between Siberia and Alaska, and Robertson thinks it safe to opt for a north Asian origin for all the remaining peoples of the two Americas.

This is a moment of some significance. It is impossible, Robertson has laid down, that America could have been colonised by any civilised people of the Old World, since the inhabitants of the New

> were in a state of society so extremely rude, as to be unacquainted with those arts which are the first essays of human ingenuity in its advance towards improvement. Even the most cultivated nations of America were strangers to many of those simple inventions, which were almost coeval with society in other parts of the world, and were known in the earliest period of civil life with which we have any acquaintance.

Robertson proceeds, in language oddly close to a passage which Gibbon may have written in 1774 but did not publish till 1781,[11] to tell us what these inventions are and why America cannot have been settled by peoples who had ever known them.

> For, although the elegant or refined arts may decline or perish, amidst the violent shocks of those revolutions and disasters to which nations are exposed, the necessary arts of life, when once they have been introduced among any people, are never lost. None of the vicissitudes in human affairs affect these, and they continue to be practised as long as the race of men exists. If ever the use of iron had been known to the savages of America, or to their progenitors; if ever they had employed a plough, a loom or a forge, the utility of those inventions would have preserved them, and it is impossible that they should have been abandoned or forgotten.[12]

It would be interesting to know when and how it came to be dogma that certain innovations, technological and metallurgical in character, were irreversible, so that for Gibbon there was proof that human civilisation could never be entirely wiped out, and for Robertson the fact that Aztecs and Incas did not know iron or its tools was proof that America must have been settled exclusively by peoples in the hunter-gatherer condition. With Ferguson's *Essay* in mind, we expect the Siberian–Alaskan land-bridge to lead us back to the proposition that the hunting peoples of post-Japhetic Asia were the fathers of American savagery, the herding and metal-casting peoples of European barbarism. But this is the point at which Robertson pronounces, in words already quoted,[13] that the narrative of a people's origin is of less

[10] Abbatista, 1993.
[11] *Decline and Fall*, III, 'General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West'; Womersley, 1994, II, pp. 515–16.
[12] *Works*, VI, p. 274. [13] Above, p. 188.

concern to the philosopher than the contemplation of the social condition it is in; we may recall Sainte-Palaye's distinction between the *récit* and the *peinture*. Yet if the conditions in which peoples have lived are to be 'stages' in a 'progress of society', there must be a narrative of how one stage has been transformed into another, or the moral science of the diversities produced by the human mind will not become a 'history' in any but a 'natural' sense; and to dismiss a people's origins may be to deprive it of a history and make its condition so natural as to be unalterable. Europe and Asia were never merely savage, and their barbarians were the authors of the civilising process; America, we are at the brink of being told, was savage from the beginning. It will be a significant modification of Locke's 'in the beginning, all the world was America', for the savage, unlike the barbarian, will have been defined as the human who existed before history and has been unable to set it in motion; a reason why the impact of history-bearing Spaniards proved so catastrophic. All or much of the 'world' is now not-America.

We therefore look to see if Robertson moves into presenting American savagery as a uniform, static and invariable condition, and at a first reading there seems to be much evidence that he does. While he avoids the geophysical dogma of Buffon and de Pauw, he does assert that the climate of the two continents is uniformly humid rather than torrid, except in its colder extremes north and south, and that, in some way as a result, this has inhibited the growth of their animal species: the tapir is not as large as the elephant, the puma and jaguar not as fierce as the lion and tiger.[14] Yet Robertson's eye is open for exceptions. If American mammals are 'dwarfish and dastardly', the condor is the largest, the fiercest and consequently the noblest of all birds,[15] and the bones of gigantic animals have been found in the salt-licks of the Ohio, suggesting catastrophic changes in the history of the earth.[16] When it comes to the human species, Robertson is a Christian philosopher and for this reason rejects all monocausal explanations of the human condition as contrary to free will (the extent to which he remained a Calvinist is of course irrelevant here). He invokes revealed Scripture to reinforce his insistence that the human race is descended from a single pair,[17] so that racial polygeneticism cannot explain the savage condition, and goes on to observe that though humans are profoundly affected by climate, there is no climatic zone on earth, from the ice cap to the desert, where they have not succeeded in living, with few other than pigmental consequences for their physique.[18] The conditions in which we find them are thus the

[14] *Works*, VI, pp. 294–5, with references to Buffon.
[15] Ibid. VI, p. 267. [16] Ibid. VI, Note XXV, pp. 353–5.
[17] Ibid. VI, pp. 263–4. [18] Ibid. VI, p. 292.

product of many concurrent causes, and it is almost Robertson's last word on the matter that we must always be prepared to meet with exceptions to the rules we set up.[19] These conditions are artificial as well as natural; they are products of natural phenomena and of the human mind, so that *ce qu'il a été* is after all *ce qu'il a fait*; and Robertson's account of even the most primitive human society presents it as the joint outcome of climate and – he more than once uses the word – culture.[20] The two determined one another, since clearance and cultivation could alter climate.

In Book IV of the *History of America*, therefore, we encounter a glass half empty and half full. All American societies are said to be savage, and the savage condition is depicted as uniform and universal. This is so because it is depicted privatively, as the absence of those arts whose development constituted the progress of society away from the natural condition in which humans differ little from beasts. The Americans were fish-eaters before they were hunters;[21] and fishing is less physically and mentally demanding than hunting, where aquatic life is so abundant that it has merely to be scooped out of the water;[22] while where the pursuit of game did act as a stimulus,

> the Americans were more remarkable for agility than strength. They resembled beasts of prey, rather than animals formed for labour[23] –

a condition found only where domestication by humans had occurred – and this physical character has been inherited to the point where forced labour has caused them to die in such numbers as to threaten their extinction.[24] Since they will not labour, the powers of their minds are not developed by the action of producing objects, or the contemplation of the objects they produce. Even African slaves despise them on these grounds,[25] and Robertson is close to suggesting that the capacity for labour is the engine of human progress. He will not have it, however, that American 'indolence', or incapacity for labour, is the sign or effect of any natural or physical inferiority.[26] It is socially induced; a way of life without labour begets an incapacity for it; and though caused by climate, these customs and their

[19] Ibid. VII, p. 91; the concluding sentence of Book IV.

[20] For Robertson's use of this word, see *Works*, VI, p. 268; VII, pp. 5, 7. It is strongly connected with the words 'agriculture' and 'cultivation', those agencies by which the climate is modified and the powers of the mind developed, but has not yet come to mean the state of civilisation to which they have brought a people.

[21] The *Ichthyophagi* of the shores of the Persian Gulf were the most primitive food-gatherers mentioned by ancient writers. See DF, V, ch. 50, n. 9 (Womersley, 1994, III, p. 154); Gibbon's sole encounter with 'savage' food-gatherers, as opposed to the 'pastoral' Arabs.

[22] *Works*, VII, pp. 2–3.

[23] Ibid. VI, p. 293.

[24] Ibid. VI, pp. 196–7; VII, pp. 16, 308–9; VIII, pp. 75–7.

[25] Ibid. VI, p. 296, and Note LII, p. 368.

[26] Ibid. VI, p. 296.

consequences are created by culture. Robertson is thus able to hold forth about the uniformities of American climate at such length that he was taken to be an ally of Buffon and de Pauw, while maintaining his distance from them by insisting on the ultimate superiority of what he terms 'moral and political causes'.[27] It is the ancient argument from 'second nature'; the savage is the author of his own condition but at the same time its prisoner, since he makes himself what he is and finds it almost impossible to escape being his own product. The masculine pronouns become poignant when Robertson considers the subject of sexuality. He shares with the other Scottish philosophers a need to convince women that only the progress of society towards the commercial stage has made their life tolerable,[28] and insists that in a hunting culture they are the slaves of men, condemned to domestic servitude and petty agriculture, and that the men feel towards them no affection and little physical appetite. The wandering giant of literature, with his proclivity for casual rape, has nearly vanished from the philosophical scenario, and Robertson is saying that the hunter-gatherer existence develops so few skills, passions and appetites that while it may stunt the frame of man, it certainly stunts his libido. He comes remarkably close to saying that the sexual appetite is a social construct and can occur only where productive labour has diversified social roles and created leisure for sentiment, and therefore appetites, to develop.

> In a state of high civilization, this passion, inflamed by restraint, refined by delicacy and cherished by fashion, occupies and engrosses the heart. It is no longer a simple instinct of nature; sentiment heightens the ardour of desire, and the most tender emotions of which our frame is susceptible soothe and agitate the soul. This description, however, applies only to those, who, by their situation, are exempted from the cares and labours of life. Among persons of inferior order, who are doomed by their condition to incessant toil, the dominion of this passion is less violent; their solicitude to procure subsistence, and to provide for the first demand of nature, leaves little leisure for attending to its second call.

If in an advanced society sexuality is a prerogative of the employing classes, we

> may well suppose, that amidst the hardships, the dangers, and the simplicity of savage life, where subsistence is always precarious, and often scanty, where men are almost continuously engaged in the pursuit of their enemies, or in guarding against their attacks, and where neither dress nor reserve are employed as arts of female allurement, that the attention of the Americans to their women would be

[27] Ibid. VI, p. 297.

[28] Ibid. VI, pp. 294, 297–8, 318–23. For Scottish writing on the history of women, see Alexander, 1779; Millar, 1806; Moran, 1999.

extremely feeble, without imputing this solely to any physical defect or degradation in their frame.

The reasons why savage sexuality is more 'feeble' than brutal are not 'solely' physical; Robertson is not much of a racial theorist, but a good deal of a social determinist.

It is accordingly observed, that in those countries of America, where, from the fertility of the soil, the mildness of the climate, or some farther advances which the natives have made in improvement –

climate must always be balanced by culture –

the means of subsistence are more abundant, and the hardships of savage life are less severely felt, the animal passion of the sexes becomes more ardent. Striking examples of this occur among some tribes seated on the banks of great rivers well stored with food, among others who are masters of hunting grounds abounding so much with game that they have a regular and plentiful supply of nourishment with little labour. The superior degree of security and affluence which these tribes enjoy, is followed by their natural effects. The passions implanted in the human frame by the hand of nature acquire additional force;

the women have leisure to dress as sexual objects and the men to notice and respond;

and as hardly any restraint is imposed on the gratification of desire, either by religion, or laws, or decency, the dissolution of their manners is excessive.[29]

A footnote suggests that Robertson is using the source that had moved Ferguson to remark that 'the female sex domineers on the frontiers of Louisiana'.[30] These riverbank Tahitis or Cytheras may occur in fishing or hunting cultures if the game is sufficiently profuse, and the spread of sexuality may not then be conditioned by class; but it is more likely to develop where appropriation and industry have diversified both labour and libido. In Louisiana Robertson notices the Natchez, 'a powerful tribe now extinct',[31] who are bracketed with a culture centred at Bogota in New Granada as having

made such progress in agriculture and arts, that the idea of property was introduced in some degree in the one community, and fully established in the other.[32]

Both communities possessed the beginnings of a code of laws, and simultaneously a class system of nobles and commoners. In each, however, rule was

[29] All these passages occur at *Works*, VI, pp. 297–8. [30] NCG, p. 336.
[31] *Works*, VII, p. 20. [32] Ibid. VII, p. 24.

exercised by a divinised monarch who was priest of the Sun, and Robertson is moved to remark that not only 'avarice and ambition', but 'the fatal influence' of 'superstition' were combining to establish 'despotism' at the beginnings of civil society.[33] Elsewhere he mentions both superstition and enthusiasm as occurring in savage cultures;[34] the remark seems at variance with Hume's account,[35] which associates enthusiasm with a capacity for abstract speculation that Robertson is resolute in denying the savage mind.[36] Enough was known about religion in hunter-gatherer cultures, however, to make it clear that the animist was fully capable of believing himself possessed by the spirits he worshipped. It was rather the growth of priesthoods that must be connected with social progress. Robertson gives an account of 'savage' religion that stresses the role of what he calls 'physicians',[37] and later colonial vocabularies would persist in calling 'medicine-men' and 'witch-doctors', but the absence of large kingdoms and mythical legislators from his material means that he need not embark on the *philosophe* analysis of how legislators generate priests.[38] The sociology of religion was always rather tenuously considered by Scottish social theory.

The Natchez and Bogota cultures – Robertson indicates that there are some others like them,[39] and the greater exceptions of Mexico and Peru are still to come – return us to the problem of the glass half empty and half full. On the one hand Robertson's account of 'savage' culture flattens them into uniformity; on the other there are exceptions, and the role of climate is limited by the insistence that even these cultures are what the active powers of the human mind have made them. Why then do exceptions occur? Conversely, why have these exceptions not coalesced into a history of the progress of society in the Americas? The former question is answered by the general statement that in a multicausal universe exceptions will always happen. The answer – it is not presented as a solution – to the latter seems to be that the prerequisites of progress laid down by stadial theory have not been met in America as they have been in Eurasia. The absence of a pastoral stage, and later of an arable agriculture, forms, it is to be feared, the great contribution which Scottish philosophical history has made to the theory of American society. In Robertson's *History* it becomes the generalisation that (except in the Andes) Americans have failed in the domestication of animals. Reindeer and the climates in which they flourish abound in Canada, but they are merely hunted whereas the Lapps herd them. Asian peoples who are probably the ancestors of the Americans have

[33] Ibid. VII, pp. 25, 60–1. [34] Ibid. VI, p. 274. [35] NCG, pp. 193–6, 207–17.
[36] *Works*, VI, pp. 309–14; VII, pp. 54–7. [37] Ibid. VII, pp. 64–7.
[38] Above, p. 33; below, pp. 248–53. [39] *Works*, VII, pp. 20, 21.

domesticated the horse, the camel and the sled-dog;[40] it is true that these species are absent from the New World,[41] but the buffalo have not been put to use like the oxen. If Robertson had been informed of the horse-riding cultures of the Plains Indians – which had taken shape by this time – he would have asked whether the horse was being used for any purpose but hunting and war. If not, he would have replied that the Plains tribes were still savages.

Nor have the Americans, though they know how to work gold and silver, discovered the complex processes of smelting iron;[42] and it is by harnessing a draught animal to a ploughshare, preferably one mounted on wheels, that humans have come to cultivate and appropriate the earth, and hold it by tenures which law exists to regulate. This is the point at which the pastoral becomes the arable, and it too is missing from the New World, leaving it undeveloped. Robertson leaves unanswered – we might say wisely – the question why the leaps from one technique and state of society to another, which constitute social progress, have not occurred in the Americas. Neither climate, in which he does believe, nor inherent racial inferiority, in which on the whole he does not, furnishes a sufficient answer. Climate and culture interact, and a human society may be imprisoned within the customs, manners and modes of thinking which it generates; but this can happen in the Old World as well as the New, and – leaving out of account the fortunate mixture of cultures which has characterised the history of Europe – it may be that before a breakthrough or takeoff can occur, a very great number of causes must concur, and that this happens only rarely. At other points in his writings, Robertson made extensive use of the concept of providence; but it cannot be said that his Deity was solicitous for his American children.

With Books v and vi we return to narratives of the conquests of Mexico and Peru. It will be recalled that the function of narrative history was to display the human mind in action, its powers most violently agitated and most fully extended. These conditions were not met by the massacres perpetrated by the Spaniards in Hispaniola and Cuba, but are more fully satisfied when conquistadors encounter the city-based empires of Tenochtitlan and Cuzco. The sheer amazement of Spaniards, Mexicans and Peruvians at encountering one another, the sheer recklessness and amoral capacity which the Spaniards display, the sheer incomprehension and inability to respond of Montezuma and Atahualpa,[43] make for narrative of a high order. Hernan

[40] Ibid. vii, pp. 8–10. [41] Ibid. pp. 9–10. [42] Ibid. vii, pp. 11–12.
[43] I preserve, as does Robertson, the Spanish spelling of these names.

Cortes is sometimes at a loss; he and his men undergo the disaster of the Noche Triste;[44] but he rises above these to display the qualities of a modern Alexander, a new prince in a situation undreamed of by Machiavelli. This does not make him a legislator, the founder of a new civil order; does it leave him a barbarian? The answer seems to be that the powers of his mind are higher than that, though this does not diminish his entire lack of scruple or the appalling destructiveness of the Spanish impact on Mexican society. We are, however, appalled to read of them, and the powers of our minds are engaged. By contrast, the Pizarro brothers are not displayed as anything higher than the brigands they were, and the record of their dealings with the Inca is calculated rather to disgust than appal. Cortes, furthermore, obeys and consents when the Castilian bureaucracy decides to cut the Marques del Valle de Oaxaca down to size;[45] he is something less or more than a *principe nuovo*, namely a servant of state in the new European order emerging under Charles V. The Pizarros in the like circumstances go unhesitatingly into armed rebellion, launching Spanish Peru into the first of its civil wars.

From the narrative of conquest, we turn in Book VII to the portrayal of the conquered, and it is reasonable to ask why matters are presented in this order. Gibbon portrayed the condition of the Persian and German cultures before he began the narrative of their actions; but the Germans were to act as conquerors, not victims, in the story he was beginning to tell. By deferring his portraits of the Aztecs and Incas until their conquest was complete, Robertson deprived them of capacity for acting in their history and maintaining its continuity; this after all is what conquest means. The fact that Montezuma[46] and Atahualpa were princes, the rulers of empires, gave the history of their encounters with Cortes and Pizarro something of the character of a narrative of statecraft; but now that it was over, Robertson proposed to enquire what sort of princes and rulers they had been. Book VII is a continuation of Book IV; it asks how far the Aztec and Inca empires form an exception to the general rule of American savagery, and by implication whether anything akin to the progress of society had taken shape in the New World – a question already outlined in the treatment of the Natchez and Bogota cultures. In reply we again receive a cup half empty and half full. In comparison with savage cultures the two empires rank as civilisations; in comparison with Eurasian civilisations, ancient and modern, they appear still savage.[47] The rationale of this reply is of interest.

[44] *Works*, VII, pp. 175–6, 178, 182–4. [45] Ibid. VII, pp. 229–33; the conclusion of Book V.
[46] I retain the older spelling, now replaced by 'Moctezuma', when writing of historians who used it.
[47] *Works*, VIII, pp. 1–2.

It is allowed that both Aztec and Inca culture had reached the stage of tilling and appropriating land, though we are not told much about their technologies. Property might be inherited or conveyed; held by individuals or corporations; might consist of land or of moveable goods.[48] There existed systems of law to regulate these tenures;[49] a differentiation of specialised crafts into guilds; a differentiation of society into classes;[50] a monarchy which was despotic in the sense that it was absolute and divine,[51] but not in the sense that it reduced the subjects to servility by denying them the rights of property (from Robertson's later work on India we learn that he had rejected the concept of 'oriental despotism' more or less completely). The absence of a shepherd stage is present as a concept but very little mentioned; and by the standard of the Scottish perception of the stage of agriculture, the Meso-American claim to civilisation seems established.

The grounds on which it is withheld from them lie outside the simple succession of the four stages of appropriation and production. The two empires lacked alphabetic writing, ferrous metallurgy, domesticated animals (the llama excepted), wheeled traffic and money as a medium of exchange. These deficiencies set limits to their power to unify extended empire and develop the useful, liberal and fine arts. The double standard reappears when we are told that the roads of the Inca empire were superior to anything in post-Roman Europe,[52] but that since they were not traversed by marching legions, hoofed mammals ridden or harnessed, or the wheels of merchants' wagons, they can have been little more than footways for the use of the messengers whom the Inca maintained to make up for their lack of a written script. The quipu are assumed to have been mere mnemonic devices, not texts that could be read.[53] Robertson argues further that Mexican writing has progressed only a short distance beyond the pictographic towards the hieroglyphic,[54] though he goes on to concede that their calendrical systems indicate considerable progress in numerical calculation. Lacking both money and letters – the two means of making our wants known at a distance, and complicating our ideas by making them visible objects of reflection – the Mexicans and Peruvians must have resembled the savage in a very limited capacity for abstract thinking. How they managed to engage in abstruse calculations[55] in the absence of

[48] Ibid. VIII, pp. 8, 44–5. [49] Ibid. pp. 10–11.
[50] Ibid. pp. 11–13. [51] Ibid. VIII, pp. 14–16, 39–40, 43–4.
[52] Ibid. VIII, pp. 49–50.
[53] Ibid. VIII, p. 37. See pp. 21–2 for the contention that pictograms are not ideograms and cannot convey abstract thoughts.
[54] Ibid. VIII, pp. 21–2. [55] Ibid. VIII, pp. 23–4.

abstract ideas is perhaps difficult to explain; but – even if we disregard the Aztecs with their unreliable and bloodthirsty gods, demanding an ongoing holocaust – the history of religion in Peru enables Robertson to make his point. He is perfectly prepared to believe in the original legislator Manco Capac, who with his consort Mama Ocello had founded systems of just law and a benign superstition of sun-worship;[56] but if Manco Capac had escaped the common fate of legislators who inadvertently founded priesthoods to undo their work, the absence of writing meant that there were no Peruvian philosophers either. The non-occurrence of an American 'Axial Age', in which religion and philosophy were indistinguishable, once more caused Meso-American history to fall short of the standards set by Eurasian.

Reading all this, Gibbon wrote from Paris in 1777 to say that what gave him most satisfaction was

> that the original, perhaps the most curious portion of human manners, is at length rescued from the hands of sophists and declaimers.[57]

There can be little doubt who he meant, though Robertson mentions the *Histoire des deux Indes* with respect.[58] The narrative of the conquest in Book VI, and the portrayal of pre-conquest society in Book VII, alike lead into the history of the establishment of the Spanish monarchy's stable authority in all the American viceroyalties from Chile to California. Book VIII recounts this history through the Habsburg into the Bourbon dynasties; but though it surveys the failures of Habsburg policy with its monopolies and extraction of bullion, and ends with the hope of a more soundly established commerce under Bourbon enlightenment, this book does not fully integrate the history of America with that of Europe as Robertson had designed the latter. That is, it does not recount the history of Spanish decline and possible recovery, in which American silver had played so often-described a part, as central to the history of the European states system as set forth in the *History of Charles V*. We seem to be faced once more with Robertson's refusal to venture beyond the sixteenth century. Nor – and this is where the *History of America* has incurred most censure – is it a history of Spanish culture, creole and clerical, in the New World. Philosophical history in the

[56] Ibid. VIII, pp. 41–3. It remains superstition because no Inca Akhenaton has transformed the sun into an idea (p. 42; Akhenaton is of course not mentioned). Spanish American historians credited both Huayna Capac the Inca and Nezahualcoyotl of Texcoco with the perception that the sun must have had a creator.

[57] Ibid. I, p. xxxi; *Letters*, II, p. 153.

[58] *Works*, VIII, p. 33n.; IX, p. 159. Gibbon admired Buffon and spoke quite respectfully of de Pauw; Womersley, 1994, III, pp. 1201, 1249.

broadest sense, as we shall see when dealing with Raynal and Diderot, left unsolved the problem of writing the history of settler societies, and Robertson – though he gave offence by repeating the clichés of creole languor and decadence[59] – did not attempt much more than a history of Spanish policy. We must remember, however, that he had intended to return to the history of English America once the revolution there was accomplished, and there are the two fairly complete chapters, on the history of Virginia to 1688 and of New England to 1652, which inform us that this would have entailed a study of the history of religion in the lands subject to the crowns of England and Scotland, throughout the seventeenth and perhaps the eighteenth centuries. It is possible that Robertson intended such a history; possible also that this is one reason why he did not carry out his engagement and we have no history of the American Revolution as a Scottish philosophical historian would have seen it. There is a letter of 1779 in which Gibbon refers to a report that Robertson has given up a design of continuing Hume's history of England, and suggests that he write a history of French Protestantism instead.[60] Robertson could have reached the Edict of Nantes without much difficulty; to carry on to the Revocation and the *Réfuge* would have entailed breaking ground he in fact left undisturbed.

The *History of America* therefore returns to Robertson's central concern with the history of Europe, and to his apparent disinclination – noted in an earlier volume[61] – to carry the latter too close to the problems of his own time. He hesitated to write the history of English America in a time of civil war, and there are further reasons why it remained unfinished. The Edinburgh anti-popery riots of 1779 – as alarming if less devastating than those in London the following year – endangered him personally, and seem to have marked the end of the Moderate ascendancy in the form over which he had presided. In 1780, partly for reasons of health, he announced his retirement from ecclesiastical politics, and though he lived another thirteen years, did not continue the historical project he had begun.[62] He brought out a revised edition of his writings, in which he defended the *History of America* against the criticisms of Clavijero, but the major work of his last years, the *Historical Disquisition concerning the Knowledge which the Ancients had of India*, published in 1791, belongs in a historical context other than any we have so far considered: that formed by the British acquisition of empire in India, the impeachment of Warren Hastings and the revolution in France. It must therefore be considered in another place. We return to the context in which the *History of America* was written and published, read and criticised.

[59] *Works*, VIII, p. 94.
[60] Ibid. I, p. xxxvi; *Letters*, II, pp. 232–3.
[61] NCG, pp. 296–9.
[62] Brown, 1997, pp. 30–5.

CHAPTER 12

Ancient history for modern colonists: the reception of Robertson

(1)

We lack detailed knowledge of the circumstances in which Robertson first conceived his project of a multi-national history of European America, and then found it interrupted by the Anglo-American war. The after-effects of the latter may have been among the circumstances which both terminated his public career and interrupted his work as a historian, so that the project he had begun remained unfinished. So far in the present series, he has appeared as a historian of the Scottish school working on the history of Europe, who decided that the encounter with America was profoundly important in that history, but beyond the Atlantic had been an encounter with a universe of savagery, of which the only history that could be written was philosophical rather than civil: a *peinture* of peoples who had not embarked on actions of which any *récit* was worth writing and who had not acquired the capacity to write one. We have now to turn to a set of circumstances of which Robertson may or may not have had prior knowledge, and in which his work met with opposition he may or may not have expected. This story is of importance to the study of how European historiography was developing, in the encounter both with itself and with history beyond Europe.

In developing his account of the Americas as a universe of savagery, Robertson had linked himself, and knew that he was so doing, with those – de Pauw, Buffon and Raynal – who had denied that pre-Conquest Americans had raised themselves above savagery to civilisation and empire, had dismissed Spanish evidence to the contrary as the fantasies of conquerors and clerics, and had described the American environment as unfriendly to animal and human development. He had retained independence of judgment with regard to these theses, but had operated within them to the point where he could be considered one of the school putting them forward, and was so considered by a vigorous group of critics to whom he

had to reply and who belonged to a historic culture that has received, and deserved, attention from twentieth-century historians, in particular Pagden, Brading and Cañizares. This was the culture, and the historiography, of Spanish Americans, who saw de Pauw, Robertson and Raynal as spearheads of an attack upon their past and present, directed by Spanish ministers who had enlisted a non-Spanish species of philosophy in their anti-colonist campaign.

To write of Spanish Enlightenment is to become involved in the debate now current as to whether 'Enlightenment' should be studied in 'national' or 'cosmopolitan' contexts; the only possible answer, of course, is that it must be studied in both, nor does the enumeration of contexts end there. To this it must next be added that statesmen, publicists and philosophers in Bourbon Spain saw their kingdom, monarchy and empire – if that be a 'national context' – as backward and marginal in a Europe whose history could be written as one in which Spain had failed to take part.[1] This was the history in earlier volumes termed 'the Enlightened narrative', that of a 'Christian millennium' of excessive ecclesiastical power followed by ecclesiastical anarchy, from which Europe had recently emerged as an order of states linked by treaties, commerce and shared manners, constituting a civil society that could contain religion among its governing practices. Since the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 was held by several writers to have marked the institution of this order, the phrase 'the Utrecht Enlightenment' has been occasionally used to denote 'Enlightenment' as this narrative defined it.

All the terms within quotation marks – 'Enlightenment' included – have been coined by historians writing of the eighteenth century, and were not in use in that era itself; it can be contended, however, that its language shows philosophers and historians consciously endorsing the accounts of history and philosophy contained within this narrative. For Spaniards, the problem was that Utrecht marked the end of the 'War of the Spanish Succession', both a global conflict and a civil war within the Spanish monarchy and empire, occasioned by the latter's inability to maintain its autonomy. It can therefore be held – and was held both within and without the monarchy after Utrecht – that 'Spain' might be conceived as a 'nation' self-excluded from a 'Europe' defined by 'Enlightenment', with the result that 'Enlightenment' became the 'cosmopolitan' ideology of a 'Europe' defined by the exclusion of 'Spain' (or of any other culture deemed to have failed to meet its standards). But this 'Europe' and its 'Enlightenment' were defined by the victors of Utrecht: specifically by France and Britain, deeply antagonistic

[1] The fullest account of this perception in English is in Cañizares, 2001, ch. 3.

and at the same time intimately linked, who had done most to impose its terms and invent (if they could not control) its 'Enlightenment'. It was possible – and the language is only partly anachronistic – for Spain to be judged backward by the standards of a Europe and an Enlightenment in which it had failed to share, but whose policies and philosophies it might seek to import in the attempt to reform itself.

De Pauw, Buffon, Robertson and Raynal were (and may be) perceived as forming a group 'cosmopolitan' in the senses both that they belonged to different nationalities – de Pauw was a cosmopolitan adventurer – and that they were aware of one another as sharing ideas communicated within an international (not a universal) culture. They could be perceived as belonging to a non-Spanish and 'European' school of thought enlisted by Spanish reformers in an attempt to reform a monarchy which had failed by the standards of Utrecht and had failed to take part in a history written to explain it. Though 'enlightenment' had not yet become the term it is for us, much of the language, including the historiography, it now entails was already in use by participants in eighteenth-century discussions. Though the writers named cannot be said to have intended to carry out a set of intentions shared with each other and the Spanish ministers who welcomed their works and promoted them, they were aware of each other and of their Spanish supporters. The Conde de Campomanes, one of the most active of the latter,[2] corresponded with Robertson and Raynal;[3] there was a proposal to translate the *History of America* into Spanish;[4] Robertson praised Campomanes in Book VIII of the *History*,[5] which is a detailed account of the former unenlightened policies of the monarchy towards its American viceroyalties, and of the enlightened commercial policies which are now to succeed them.

The policies envisaged by Campomanes appear, at this level of generality, typical of what we call Enlightenment: a promotion and diversification of commerce – Robertson has much to say about the fallacy of an extractive rather than an investing economy, and its consequences in slavery and forced labour – coupled with a drastic reduction of clerical, especially regular, power and wealth. Since the promotion of historical writing was among Campomanes's interests, we wonder if an Enlightened history of the peninsular kingdoms themselves was envisaged. It would have been a history unlike that of other European cultures: would its antiquity have been Roman, or extended retrospectively to Carthaginians and Celtiberians

[2] Ibid. pp. 170–81, 190–202 and *passim*. [3] Ibid. pp. 176–7, 181. [4] Ibid., pp. 170–8.
[5] See in particular Note L; *Works*, VIII, p. 317.

(the hero-victims of Numantia who appear in an earlier volume[6])? And the 'Christian millennium' in Spanish history was far from exclusively Christian. Campomanes envisaged a history anti-papal and anti-monastic along the usual lines, but there is record also of a vigorous insistence that the history of Arabic culture (was Jewish mentioned?) was integrally part of the history of Spain.[7] An Enlightened master narrative from a Spanish hand might have altered all perceptions of both Europe and Enlightenment; but it would have had to overcome daunting obstacles, and perhaps this is why it did not (as far as we know) appear. The history of medieval Spain remained a dark patch on the map drawn by Enlightened historiography; and the debate in which Robertson knowingly took part, though he may have underestimated the passions it would arouse, was over the history of Spanish America – the history he had written, rather than the history he had not; the Peninsula is not prominent in the *View of the Progress of Society in Europe* prior to the union of the kingdoms by Ferdinand and Isabella.

The Spanish monarchy, rather perhaps than the Spanish kingdoms, is a major force in creating the Europe of Charles V, as well as in the conquests of the Caribbean, Mexico and the Andes, which Robertson had determined must be a history of quite another kind. The militarily formidable but commercially unsound empire of Charles's successors was a major if decaying actor in the history of seventeenth-century Europe, leading to the defeat of the universal monarchies and the Europe of Utrecht, which Robertson had not attempted. The greatness and collapse of Spain's silver-based empire may be an underlying theme of the *History of America*; but the place of this work in the history of historiography is determined by Robertson's decision to join de Pauw and others in denying that the Inca and Aztec monarchies constituted empires whose history before their conquest could or need be written. His argument that the material conditions of empire and civilisation were lacking includes, and may conclude with, the contention that these cultures lacked the means of writing history.

Why Robertson – indeed, why the others – chose to make this their position is less than clear. On the one hand, he at least cannot be convincingly accused of an obsession with philosophical history at the expense of civil; on another, it does not seem likely that he shared the intention of which his adversaries accused him – that of undermining a creole patriot ideology which affirmed the existence of ancient empires and saw their denial as an attack on its own autonomy. It is not clear that he knew this

[6] FDF, pp. 39–40, 84, 92. [7] Cañizares, 2001, p. 157.

culture and ideology existed, or anticipated the anger with which it would respond to him. It is not unknown that settlers who have conquered a territory produce idealised accounts of those they have conquered; to do so situates conquest itself in a moral and aesthetic universe in which it is not merely brutal and illegitimate. It was important that Cortes should be a hero, even if his actions were appalling, whereas those of Pizarro were merely disgusting; conquest had its own ethos, though one more pagan than Christian. Heroes required heroic adversaries; noble savages, like the Araucanians of Chile, might fill this role, but even the most exotic and barbaric of empires filled it better, because their moral, cultural and dramatic codes were more elaborate. And to endow the conquered with codes of law – even if this meant denying that they had been savages – furnished an additional means of legitimating the transfer of lands and jurisdictions to the conquerors. Norman and Angevin rulers in England had promoted, if they did not invent, the good laws of the holy Edward;[8] and in Robertson's generation, discontented Catholics and Protestants were discovering the writers of Christian and even heathen and heroic Ireland.[9] In Mexico particularly, but also in Peru, there were creole elites who needed to assert the reality of civilised empires before the Conquest and bitterly resented what they saw as a conspiracy of peninsular and European philosophers to take it from them. They had produced, and would produce in reply, some massive historiography of their own.

Recent scholarship has displayed the intellectual vigour of this 'creole patriotism' and its 'epistemology',[10] a vigour very largely clerical, since many sought careers in the church when they thought civil office reserved to *peninsulares*; a vigour, it may be added, of which Robertson had written so dismissively as to leave doubt whether he thought it an adversary worth combating. Churchmen had an interest of their own in depicting pre-Conquest empires as civilised, since it increased the chances that the ancient religions – even if satanically corrupted – had partaken of the *prisca theologia* persisting among Noachically descended gentiles, a thesis which had lent itself readily to Christian conversion. This was a theme of baroque scholarship, never quite extinct in the eighteenth century; and the resistance to de Pauw and Robertson was much strengthened by the activities of a Jesuit diaspora, exiled from Mexico to Italy after the suppression of their Society and adding their anger to that of the creoles many of them were. Francisco Clavijero was one of these.

[8] See, recently, Greenberg, 2001. [9] Kidd, 1999, ch. 7.
[10] Brading, 1990, part 2 and *passim*; Cañizares, 2001, ch. 4 and *passim*.

It would be easy to construct an image of the creole patriotism asserting their Mexican history as a largely clerical affair, and to suppose this as a reason why the *philosophe* Campomanes was glad to see it undermined. We are warned, however, against too readily portraying this historiographic episode as a simple matter of clerics against bureaucrats, creoles against *peninsulares* or baroque learning against Enlightened philosophy. In Spain as well as New Spain, it appears, there was a diversity of historical opinions and of intellectual factions supporting them. As early as 1749, there had been an intriguing incident when Lorenzo Boturini, who had made a collection of Mexican antiquities confiscated by the governors of Mexico, had appeared in Spain and sought to recover it by offering a history of the New World.[11] Boturini was that rare bird in eighteenth-century historiography, a convinced – if not always a confessed or a very insightful – disciple of Giambattista Vico, and those for whom the Neapolitan philosopher is an intellectual hero looking beyond Enlightenment itself may regard Boturini's rejection as an indication of Spanish backwardness.[12] It is now argued, however, that his failure had much to do with his own personality,[13] and more intriguingly that Vico's history of mankind, with its ages of gods and giants, heroes and men, and its safeguarding of the Mosaic chronology, might appear to both churchmen and *philosophes* a regression to the baroque.[14] The scene was not necessarily simpler thirty years later. It has been thought that a project once favoured by Campomanes, for a Spanish translation of Robertson's *America*, was dropped in anticipation of a Spanish decision to enter the War of the American Revolution against Great Britain; but this is now doubted on the grounds that academic infighting offers a better explanation.[15] It will be seen in a later chapter, however, that Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*, another publication of the de Pauw school, has among its objectives the promotion of just such a Franco-Spanish *revanche* for the Seven Years War.

It is a problem, then – especially for those now doubtful of the concept of nationalism as applicable in the pre-Revolutionary world – how far we are to take the model of 'creole patriotism' as indicative of a creole 'identity' needing an ancient as well as a modern history of an American world in which to situate and discover itself. If this thesis may be accepted, the

[11] For his adventures and misadventures, Brading, 1990, pp. 381–6; Cañizares, 2001, pp. 133–55.
[12] Cañizares, 2001, cites Venturi as holding this view.
[13] Cañizares, 2001, pp. 149, 151, 153, 155.
[14] Ibid. pp. 146–7. Clavijero (Clavigero, 1806, II, p. 6) speaks of 'the pompous conjecture and absurd system of Cav. Boturini'.
[15] Cañizares, 2001, pp. 178ff.

problem of pre-Conquest savagery now merges with that of pre-Conquest empire, and creoles are seen asserting that ancient America contains a civil as well as a philosophical history – not, however, a history of philosophy – of which they are the heirs. If not, it becomes harder to determine just what they meant to affirm or deny; but the formal question of what kinds of history could be written of America ancient and modern remains where Robertson placed it, at the centre of the picture. This can be seen if we study the creole response to de Pauw and Raynal as well as to him.

(11)

The best-known and most energetic response on behalf of the histories of ancient America built up since the Conquest is that of the exiled Jesuit Francisco Javiero Clavijero, usually styled from the Italian in which his work was first published Francesco Saverio Clavigero.[16] Much of his three volumes is aimed at Robertson, who was constrained to reply to him in a revised edition of the *History of America*, but the *Storia antica del Messico*[17] does battle with all three heads of the philosophic Cerberus, as well as with Buffon. Of Raynal we have the following:

'Niente, dice, c'è permesso affermare, se non che l'Imperio Messicano si reggeva da Motezuma, allorchè gli Spagnuoli approdarono alle coste del Messico'. Ecco un parlare veramente franco, e da Filosofo del Secolo XVIII. Dunque niente più c'è permesso affermare? E perchè non dubitare anche della esistenza di Motezuma? . . . non è facile il trovar altra Storia, i cui avvenimenti sieno stati da un maggior numero di storici testificati, di questi de' Messicani.[18]

['Nothing', says he, 'are we permitted to affirm, except that the Mexican empire was governed by Montezuma, at the time that the Spaniards landed on the Mexican coast.' This is the manner of speaking of a philosopher of the eighteenth century. Nothing more can we be permitted to affirm? And why not doubt also of the existence of Montezuma? . . . it is not easy to find another history, the events of which have been confirmed by a greater number of historians than those of the Mexicans.][19]

And of a factual error by Robertson:

S'io non vivessi nel secolo XVIII, nel quale si veggono adottati i più stravaganti pensieri, mi sarei maravigliato assai, che una tal opinione fosse generalmente accettata.[20]

[16] For studies of Clavijero and his work, see Pagden, 1990, pp. 99–105; Brading, 1990, pp. 450–62; Cañizares, 2001, pp. 235–49. The Italian spelling of his name is used here in citing his work.
[17] Clavigero, 1780 and 1806. The latter is an American reprint of the English translation of 1787.
[18] Clavigero, 1780, 1, p. 19. [19] Clavigero, 1806, 1, pp. xxx–xxxi.
[20] Clavigero, 1780, 1, p. 24 n.

[If we did not live in the eighteenth century, in which the most extravagant sentiments have been adopted, I should be astonished that such an opinion was generally received.][21]

While de Pauw is 'the indecent and lying author of the work entitled *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*',[22] Clavijero clearly regarded his adversaries, who would dismiss oral and written evidence when they thought it philosophically impossible, as a new school of pyrrhonists like those who had infested the century at its beginnings; but he was not quite a Mabillon, able to confute extreme scepticism by adducing new methods of critical verification. Much of his work amounts to a heaping up of historical authorities:

Nè meno può dubitarsi, che la Nazioni, le quali anticamente quella terra popolarono, vennero ad essa da' paesi più settentrionali dell'America . . . In questi . . . punti tutti trovo d'accordo gli Storici Toltechi, Cicimochi, Acolhui, Messicani e Tlascallesi.[23]

[There cannot be doubt, that the men who first peopled that country, came originally from the more northern parts of America . . . All the historians, Toltecan, Chechemecan, Acolhuan, Mexican, and Tlascalan, are agreed upon these . . . points.][24]

We are in an oral and rhetorical culture; most of these 'historians' were informants whose accounts of tradition were reduced to writing by post-Conquest literati, and their authority now reinforces one another. The effect is to build up a chronicle of successive peoples, their wars, kings and empires: the 'Mexicans', our 'Aztecs', being preceded by the Toltecs, the Olmecs and a dimly perceived people of not quite legendary 'Giants',[25] but more significantly by recurrent waves of Chichimecs,

originari di paesi settentrionali, potendosi a ragione chiamare il settentrione dell'America al pari di quello della Europa, il Seminario del genere umano. D'ambidue, a guisa di sciami, uscir si videro Nazioni numerosissime a popolare i paesi meridionali.[26]

[originally from the northern countries, [so] as we may call the North of America, like the North of Europe, the seminary of the human race. From both, in swarms, have issued numerous nations to people the countries in the South.][27]

Here is something of a dialectic between savagery and civilisation. The Chichimecs are hunters only – it would be a weakness in the narrative,

[21] Clavigero, 1806, 1, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii, n. [22] Ibid. 11, p. 77n.
[23] Clavigero, 1780, 1, p. 124. [24] Clavigero, 1806, 1, p. 110.
[25] Ibid. 1, pp. 112–15. [26] Clavigero, 1780, 1, p. 132. [27] Clavigero, 1806, 1, p. 119.

in European eyes, that they were not shepherds – but they grow civilised through contact with the Toltecs and do not recoil in waves like Huns from the frontiers of China (Clavijero does not make this comparison). Some prefer their 'barbarous liberty'; others are organised into warring states by 'ambition and other passions which had lain dormant from the want of ideas, in times of a savage life'.[28] Here are the foundations of a philosophic history, which can be traced back to the times of Acosta, and had been recurrent in Spanish scholarship since his time. The narrative becomes one of civilised empire in the land of Anahuac, the increasing dominance of the 'Mexican' monarchy based on the sometime island of Tenochtitlan, and its relations with other cities and kingdoms of Chichimec and other descent: Tlascala, a republic 'composed of four small monarchies',[29] and Texcoco, famous for its poet and philosopher kings, Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli, whose life-spans bring us close to the Spanish conquests.[30] These and other kings make wars and speeches of a familiar neo-classical kind; they display the 'royal virtues . . . magnificence and liberality',[31] and they give laws to their kingdoms, as does the last Montezuma himself, until corrupted by despotism and the cult of human sacrifice. Classical narrative, the first component of the Momiglianan formula, is being built up by humanist rhetoric all too easily recognised, and it would be easy to dismiss it as exemplary fiction, if we did not know that one of the foundations of historiography is the critical re-telling of just such narratives. The question now becomes that of what resources for just such retelling were at the disposal of New World scholarship.

Traces of baroque thinking are to be found in Clavijero's writings. A familiar name resurfaces when we hear from a Chiapas source that one

> *Votan*, nipote di quel rispettabile vecchio, che fabbricò la barca grande per salvar se, e la sua famiglia del diluvio; ed uno di quelli, che intrapresero la fabbrica dell'alto edifizio, che si fece per salire sul Cielo, andò per espresso comando del Signore a popolar quella terra.[32]
>
> [Votan, the grandson of that respectable old man who built the great ark to save himself and family from the deluge, and one of those who undertook the building of that lofty edifice which was to reach heaven, went, by express command of the Lord, to people that land.][33]

'If we give credit to their tradition', Clavijero warns us; and he does not introduce us to Woden and Fo, or to the Figurist suggestion – he too was

[28] Ibid. 1, p. 126. [29] Ibid. 1, p. 146. [30] Ibid. 1, pp. 250–6, 311–15.
[31] Ibid. 1, p. 274. [32] Clavigero, 1780, 1, pp. 150–1. [33] Clavigero, 1806, 1, p. 141.

a Jesuit – that an 'ancient wisdom' had been handed down from the sons of Noah.[34] Jesuit scholarship was freeing itself from Neo-Platonism; and in the same way he will have none of the direct action of the Devil in American heathen history, saying of human sacrifice

> O ciò fosse un ordine del Demonio, o quel ch'è più verisimile, una crudele invenzione dei barbari Sacerdoti.[35]
>
> [whether it was an order of the demon or, what is more probable, a cruel pretence of the barbarous priests.][36]

It is a consequence of the absence of Neo-Platonism, however, that ancient America is without a history of philosophy; there are no texts or teachings, beyond the laws of benign monarchs who inculcate monotheism in private while assenting to the superstitious practices (including human sacrifice) of their subjects. Philosophic history, in the Enlightened sense of the term, appears in proportion as Clavijero is obliged to answer the 'philosophic' arguments of his three adversaries, that denied the ancients the capacity for civility, empire and history. He must either deny that Toltecs and Aztecs lacked the prerequisites of civilisation or – and here he is at his most interesting – affirm that they achieved it in other ways. Of the primeval Toltec migrants he says:

> Trattenevansi in ogni luogo, dove capitavano, quel tempo che lor suggeriva il cappriccio, o il bisogno di provedere alla conservazion della vita. Dove opportune stimavano il far più lunga dimora, fabbricavano delle case, e coltivavano la terra seminando il frumentone, il cotone, ed altre piante i cui semi secoloro portavano, per procacciarsi il bisognevole. In questa guisa andarono vagabondi incamminandosi sempre verso Mezzogiorno per lo spazio di 104 anni.[37]
>
> [In every place to which they came, they remained no longer than they liked it, or were easily accommodated with provisions. When they determined to make a longer stay, they erected houses, and sowed the land with corn, cotton and other plants, the seeds of which they had carried along with them to supply their necessities. In this wandering manner did they travel, always southward, for the space of one hundred and four years.][38]

Goguet's principle that cultivators must be sedentary is being modified in a way Gibbon would have understood. And when the fathers of the

[34] Votan recurs in one of Clavijero's appendices (Ibid. III, pp. 94–102), where it is decided that the descent of Americans cannot be traced to any son of Noah or any people of the Old World now existing, but to some unknown group among those dispersed from Shinar after the confusion of tongues. For Votan in other creole scholarship, see Cañizares, 2001, pp. 333–9.

[35] Clavigero, 1780, I, p. 171.

[36] Clavigero, 1806, I, p. 165.

[37] Clavigero, 1780, I, p. 126.

[38] Clavigero, 1806, I, p. 112.

Aztec state fortify themselves on the island of Tenochtitlan – not unlike Romulus and his followers on the primeval Capitol –

ma non per aver mutato sito i Messicani migliorarono subito la lor fortuna: poichè isolati in mezzo al lago, senza terra dove seminare, nè vesti da coprirsi, ed in perpetua diffidenza di tutti i lor vicini, menavano quivi una vita tanto misera, quanto negli altri luoghi, dov'erano stati, sostentandosi soltano degli animali, e de' vegetabili aquatici. Ma di che non è capace l'industria umana spinta dalla necessità? La più grande, che ivi sentivano i Messicani, era quella della mancanza di suolo per le loro abitazioni, mentre la isoletta di Tenochtitlan non era bastevole a tutti gli abitatori. Rimediaronvi facendo degli steccati in quelli parti, dov'era più bassa l'acqua, i quali terrapienarono con pietra e cespugli, unendo alla isoletta principali altre più piccola, e poco discoste. Per provedersi poi di pietra, di legni, di pane, e di tutto il bisognevole alla loro abitazione, ed al lor vestire e mangiare, s'applicarono con somma diligenza alla pesca non solo del pesce bianco . . . ma eziandio d'altri pescetti, e di parecchi insetti palustre, che fecero commestibili, ed alla caccia delle innumerabili spezie d'uccelli, che cercando il loro cibo nelle acque, vi concorrevano. Pel commercio di questa cacciagione coi luoghi situati sulle rive del lago, acquistavano tutto quello, che lor mancava.

Ma dove feco l'ultimo sforzo la loro industria fu nel fare dei cespugli, e del fango medesimo del lago degli orti galleggianti sull'acqua (la cui struttura e forma al suo luogo esporremo,) dove seminavano del Maiz, o frumentone, del peverone, della Chi, dei fagiuoli, e delle zucche.[39]

[by changing their situation, the Mexicans did not suddenly better their fortune: for being insulated in the middle of a lake, without lands to cultivate, or garments to cover them, and living in constant distrust of their neighbours, they led a life as miserable as it was in other places, where they had supported themselves solely on the animal and vegetable produce of the lake. But when urged by necessity, of what is not human industry capable? The greatest want which the Mexicans experienced was that of ground for their habitations, as the little island of Tenochtitlan was not sufficient for all its inhabitants. This they remedied a little by making palisades in those places where the water was shallowest, which they terraced with stones and turf, uniting to their principal island several other smaller ones at a little distance. To procure to themselves afterwards stone, wood, bread, and every thing necessary for their habitations, their clothing, and food, they applied themselves with the utmost assiduity to fishing, not only of white fish . . . but also of other little fish and insects of the marshes which they made eatable, and to the catching of innumerable kinds of birds which flocked there to feed in the waters. By instituting a traffick with this game in the other places situated on the borders of the lake, they obtained all they wanted.

But the gardens floating on the water which they made of the bushes and mud of the lake, the structure and form of which we shall elsewhere explain, discovered

[39] Clavigero, 1780, 1, pp. 169–70.

the greatest exertion of their industry; on these they sowed maize, pepper, chia, French beans, and gourds.][40]

Enlightened history has re-asserted itself, with aquaculture supplying the want of the herd and the plough. At a later phase in their history:

Poichè i Messicani scosso il giogo de' Tepanechi cominciarono colle loro conquiste a procacciarsi terreni lavorativi, s'applicarono con somma diligenza all'Agricoltura. Non avendo nè aratro, nè buoi, nè altri animali da impiegare nel coltivamento della terra, supplivano colla lora fatica, e con altri strúmenti assai semplici . . .

Per innassiare i campi servivansi delle acque de'fiumi; e de'fossati, che scendevano dalle montagne, facendo pescaje per ritenerle, e gore per condurle.[41]

[As soon as the Mexicans had shaken off the Tepanecan yoke, and had gained by their conquests lands fit for cultivation, they applied themselves with great diligence to agriculture. Having neither ploughs, nor oxen, nor any other animals proper to be employed in the culture of the earth, they supplied the want of them by labour, and other more simple instruments . . .

For the refreshment of their fields they made use of the water of rivers and small torrents which came from the mountains, raising dams to collect them, and forming canals to conduct them.][42]

After describing how efficiently a single labourer with a hoe could plant rows of corn seed, Clavijero continues:

Circondavano i loro campi con chiuse di pietra, o con siepi di *maguei*, che sono assai vantaggiose.[43]

[They surrounded their fields with stone enclosures, or hedges made of the *metl*, or aloe, which make an excellent fence.][44]

It is not clear, however, whether these were meant as protection or as demarcation. The ploughman marked off the lands which were his or his master's, but Clavijero does not here tell us whether Mexican agriculture defined the proprietor or his rights. ('The lands of the Mexican empire were divided between the crown, the nobility, the communities and the temples',[45] to whom the laws seem to have applied.)

Nelle fatiche della campagna erano gli uomini dalle lor mogli ajutati. Agli uomini toccava il zappare, e vangar la terra, il seminare, l'ammuchiar la terra attorno alle piante, ed il mietere; alle donne lo sfogliare le pannocchie, ed il nettare il grano; il farchiare, e lo sgranare erano communi agli uni, ed alle altre.[46]

[40] Clavigero, 1806, 1, p. 162; for the floating gardens, pp. 170, 180.
[41] Clavigero, 1780, 11, pp. 153–4. [42] Clavigero, 1806, 11, p. 177.
[43] Clavigero, 1780, 11, p. 154.
[44] Clavigero, 1806, 11, p. 177. Why *metl* is substituted for *maguei* is not clear.
[45] Ibid. 11, p. 138. [46] Clavigero, 1780, 11, p. 155.

[In the labours of the field the men were assisted by the women. It was the business of the men to dig and hoe the ground, to sow, to heap the earth about the plants, and to reap; to the women it belonged to strip off the leaves from the ears, and to clear the grain; to weed and to shell it was the employment of both.][47]

In an agrarian economy labour is divided, and the women are not in the servile condition supposed to mark a hunter society. The Mexicans were gardeners as well as field-workers and:

Per ciò che riguarda l'allevamento d'animali, il quale è un impiego accessoria a quello dell'Agricoltura, benchè presso i Messicani non vi fassero Pastori, per mancar loro affatto le greggie, allevavansi pure nelle lor case innumerabili spezie d'animali non conosciuti nell'Europa . . . Può dirsi, che in questo genere di magnificenza sorpassò Motezuma II tutti i Re del Mondo, e che non v'è stata mai Nazione, che agguagliar si possa ai Messicani nella cura di tante spezie d'animali, come neppur nella cognizione delle loro inclinazioni, del cibo convenevole a ciascuno e di tutt'i mezzi per la loro conservazione, e per la loro propagazione.[48]

[With respect to the breeding of animals, which is an employment associated with agriculture, although among the Mexicans there were no shepherds, they having been entirely destitute of sheep, they bred up innumerable species of animals unknown in Europe.]

though the cochineal insect is the most fully described of these.

[We may say that in this kind of magnificence, Montezuma II surpassed all the kings of the world, and that there never has been a nation equal in skill to the Mexicans in the care of so many different species of animals, which had so much knowledge of their dispositions, of the food which was most proper for each, and of all the means necessary for their preservation and increase.][49]

Clavijero is not merely extolling the palace menageries of a courtly monarchy. He insists on the reality of commerce among the ancient Mexicans,

non solo per via di permuta, come ne dicono parecchi Autori, ma eziandio di vera compra e vendita. Aveano cinque spezie di vera moneta, benchè niuna coniata, che lor serviva di prezzo per comprerar ciò che volevano.[50]

[not only carried on by way of exchange, as many authors report, but likewise by means of real purchase and sale. They have [*sic*] five kinds of real money, though it was not coined, which served them as a price to purchase whatever they wanted.][51]

These are enumerated: bags of beans of a fixed size, squares of cotton, gold dust in quills, tokens of copper and tin. Clearly, these would not

[47] Clavigero, 1806, II, pp. 178–9.
[48] Clavigero, 1780, II, pp. 158–9.
[49] Clavigero, 1806, II, pp. 182–3.
[50] Clavigero, 1780, II, p. 165.
[51] Clavigero, 1806, II, p. 191.

permit the accumulation of capital or credit; they amount to a Lockean medium of exchange, making possible the growth of action and government at an increasing distance. To this extent Clavijero has succeeded in carrying a philosophical history alternative to the Scottish scheme known to Robertson. His concern is now to show that language, letters and the growth of ideas had reached a level commensurate with the growth of court and commerce.

In una delle nostri Dissertazioni daremo una lista degli Autori, che hanno scritto in Messicano della Religione, e della Morale Cristiana, un'altra de'nomi numerali di quella lingua, ed un'altra delle voci significative di cose metafisiche, e morali, per confondere l'ignoranza e l'insolenza del Ricercatore [n. L'Autore dell'opera intitolata *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*], il quale ebbe ardire di pubblicare, che i Messicani non aveano voci per contare oltre a tre, né per esprimere l'idee metafisiche e morali, e che per la durezza della lingua Messicana non v'è stato mai Spagnuolo veruno, che sapesse pronunziarla. Daremo pur le voci numerali della stessa lingua, con cui potevano numerare i Messicani sino a quarantotto milioni almeno, e faremo vedere, quanto comune sia stata tra gli Spagnuoli questa lingua, e quanto bene l'abbiano saputa quelli, che in essa hanno scritto.[52]

[In one of our Dissertations we shall give a list of the authors who have written in the Mexican language on the Christian religion and morality, and also a list of terms, signifying metaphysical and moral ideas, in order to expose the ignorance and weakness of an author [de Pauw] who has had absurdity enough to publish that the Mexicans had no words to count above the number three, or to express any metaphysical or moral ideas, and that on account of its harshness no Spaniard had ever learned to pronounce it. We could here give the numeral words of this language, by which the Mexicans could count up to forty-eight millions at least, and could shew how common this language was among the Spaniards, and how well those who have written in it have understood it.][53]

The development of Nahuatl into a written classical and Christian language was of course an achievement of Spanish clerics;[54] Clavijero can say no more of the language of the pre-Conquest nobility than that it was capable of such a development. We have reached a point where his encomia upon ancient civilisation are seen to serve a creole interest, and there is not only a present tension between creoles and the Madrid regime – which he sees as using an alien Enlightenment against its own subjects – but a historiographic tension between creoles (especially clerics) and conquistadors. The civilisation he is praising in the interests of the former was mostly wiped out by the latter. In an earlier volume he had written:

Di tutti i suddetti palagi, giardini, e boschi altro non resta, che il bosco di Chapoltepec, che hanno conservato i Vicerè Spagnuoli per loro disporto. Tutti gli

[52] Clavigero, 1780, II, pp. 172–3.
[53] Clavigero, 1806, II, p. 199.
[54] Brading, 1990, pp. 117–20, 123–4.

altri furono da'Conquistatori messi in conquasso. Rovinarono i piu magnifici edifizii dell'Antichità Messicana or per un zelo indiscreto di religione, or per vendetta, or per servirsi de'materiali. Abbandarono il coltivamento de'giardini Reali, abbatterono i boschi, e ridussero a tale stato quella terra, che oggidì non si potrebbe credere la magnificenza di que'Re, se non ci constasse dalla testimonianza di quegli stessi, che l'annichilarono.[55]

[Of all these palaces, gardens, and woods, there is now remaining the wood of Chapoltepec only, which the Spanish viceroys have reserved for their pleasure. All the others were destroyed by the conquerors. They laid in ruins the most magnificent buildings of antiquity, sometimes from an indiscreet zeal for religion, sometimes in revenge, or to make use of the materials. They neglected the cultivation of the royal gardens, cut down the woods, and reduced that country to such a state, the magnificence of the former kings could not now find belief, were it not confirmed by the testimony of those who were the causes of its annihilation.][56]

The analogy is hard to escape. The conquistadors were Goths and Vandals, who instituted a regime of barbarism and religion – with *encomienderos* as the equivalent of feudal lords? – from which it is now a question whether the way forward is to be found by imperial or colonial leaders. Campomanes has enlisted the aid of a north-west European Enlightenment which discredits creoles by reducing all Indians to savages and all Spaniards to Visigoths. Clavijero is trying to construct a counter-history, no less Enlightened, which empowers a largely clerical creole (and Jesuit) scholarship by making it the accredited interpreter of an American antiquity. The question of concern to the present volume is the breadth and depth of the historiography he was able to put together.

(III)

He had succeeded in combining two of the three elements of the Momiglianan formula: humanist classical narrative and philosophical history. What of the third, variously termed 'erudition', 'antiquarianism' or 'philology'? This we know from the history of European historiography to have consisted of a series of contexts of linguistic, social and cultural practices, put together from a multitude of sources – textual, archival and monumental, grouped with each other by the phrase *inscriptions et belles-lettres* – and enlarging the writing of history beyond narrative in its original sense. They supplied, first, a means to what we might call 'thick description', situating words and acts, the *récit de ce qu'il a fait*, in a context of language, laws, beliefs and manners, the *peinture de ce qu'il a été*, so richly described that it could be seen changing from one condition to another

[55] Clavigero, 1780, I, pp. 273–4. [56] Clavigero, 1806, I, p. 287.

and there was a possible macro-narrative of how such change had occurred. In the second place, erudition (so to call it) supplied a great many means of criticism and verification; narratives and interpretations could be dismissed as anachronistic or otherwise incompatible with the context erudition had reconstructed – an operation distinct from the 'philosophic' pronouncement that they were incompatible with the laws of the human mind or the progress of society. Robertson, like Gibbon, was a master of all three of the Momiglianan ways of writing European history; yet he had aligned himself, to a visible degree, with Raynal and de Pauw in pronouncing, on philosophical grounds, that America had possessed no civil history and must be studied as a world of nature. It is possible to ask both why he had done this, and whether Clavijero had fully succeeded in refuting him; and it is crucial to both enquiries to ask whether the critical tools and contextual reconstructions of 'erudition' were applicable to the debatably civilised societies of pre-Conquest America.

In the late-humanist historiographic culture with which we are concerned, with its attention focused on narratives and texts, it was axiomatic that a society capable of enacting a civil history must be capable of recording and relating it; the latter condition was a pre-requisite of the former. From the first Spanish enquiries into the nature of American society, it had been asked whether the Inca and Aztec empires had possessed the means of recording and transmitting historical information, since without it they could not have been empires at all. (It should be recalled that 'empire' denoted both a society capable of governing itself and one capable of dominating others; 'empire' and 'civil society' are nearly if not fully interchangeable.) The issue had from an early time turned on the question whether ancient American carvings and codices – *inscriptions et belles-lettres* – could be read as repositories of information or narratives of human actions. If they could not, the 'historians' listed in such profusion by Clavijero could only have supplied oral information to Spanish writers literate in the European sense of the word; and it was by no means easy to regard the ancient inscriptions as 'texts' in the classic or medieval sense of that term.

The question had come to be one of the mental capacity, as well as of the scribal techniques, available to the inhabitants of a non-alphabetical culture. We have found Clavijero angrily repudiating the claim that the Mexican language was incapable of forming and re-combining abstract ideas, which had entailed the proposition that Mexican (and Peruvian) writings were pictographic and not even ideographic, so that they were incapable of relating complex narratives and were at best mnemonics and *aides-memoires* for use in oral transmission and tradition. This was a claim that could not

be made of Chinese ideograms, and the question whether Incas hailed from China or Chinese from Egypt grew correspondingly complicated and the subject of deeply baroque controversy. Clavijero himself could not claim too much for Mexican literacy and historicity; we find him saying:

> Saputo questo metodo de'Messicani è facile il conoscere a prima vista, dov'è il principio, e dove il fine di qualsivoglia dipintura storica.
>
> Non può negarsi, che un tal modo di significar le cose fosse imperfetto, imbrogliato, ed equivoco; ma è degno di lode il conato di que'Popoli per perpetuare la memoria degli avvenimenti, e la loro industria nel supplire, quantunque imperfettamente, alla mancanza delle lettere, le quali forse avrebbono ritrovate, atteso i loro progressi nella cultura, se non fosse stato sì breve il loro imperio; almeno avrebbono abbreviate considerabilmente, ed agevolate le loro dipinture colla moltiplicazione de' caratteri.
>
> Le loro dipinture peraltro non debbono tanto considerarsi, come una storia ordinata e compita, quanto come monumenti, e sostegni della tradizione.[57]
>
> [When this method of the Mexicans is understood, it is easy to discover at first sight, which is the beginning and which the end of any historical painting.
>
> It cannot be denied that this method of expressing things was imperfect, perplexed and equivocal; but praise is due to the attempt of these people to perpetuate the memory of events, and to their industry in supplying, though imperfectly, the want of letters, which it is probable they would have invented, in their progress to refinement, had their empire been of longer duration; at least they would have abridged and improved their paintings by the multiplication of characters.
>
> Their paintings ought not to be considered as a regular full history, but only as monuments and acts of tradition.][58]

Clavijero is eloquent on the care with which the ancient elites educated their children in history orally transmitted. Perhaps we are looking here at an essential link in the chain by which creoles can claim to continue ancient history after its Gothic destruction by the conquistadors; European alphabetic and linear writing has continued and even perfected ancient history by transmitting it. But he is able to speak here only of history as the classical narrative relating the deeds of warriors, statesmen and lawgivers; what, beyond conjecture, were his sources for the floating gardens of the ancient Mexicans? The question we begin to ask is whether it happened, or could have happened, that the decipherment of ancient inscriptions became the source of an American erudition or philology, as Mabillon rather than Vico might have understood these terms; not a poetics, but a source of criticism and contextualisation.

There has been intensive recent study of the progress, made in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of an archaeology of ancient calendars

[57] Clavigero, 1780, II, p. 193. [58] Clavigero, 1806, II, p. 224.

and codices, and of Robertson's very limited acquaintance with it.[59] The point has been made that baroque scholarship, precisely because of its Neo-Platonic willingness to pursue the symbolic and the esoteric, was better equipped to decipher the sign-systems of a remote and alien culture than was the Enlightened mind with its insistence on words that directly recorded the ideas arising from sensations. However this may be, the question may still be asked how far creole and clerical scholarship, even at its impressive best, possessed the archaeological resources necessary to build up an erudition and philology on the massive scale which had made these scholarly practices a third component, equal with the others, of the historiographic intellect in Europe. If we were to say that these resources were lacking, we should be at the point of saying that Clavijero's attempt to build up a Spanish American historiography the equal of Robertson's or Gibbon's could be only of limited though real success; and we should be saying also that Robertson's decision that there had been found no American civil history capable of narration and interpretation was not simply the product of a philosophic arrogance like de Pauw's. He ceased to search – we should be saying – because he had failed to find; his glass was more than half empty because it was less than half full.

(IV)

We should now turn once more to Clavijero as narrative historian. He recounts the story of the Conquest as far as the defeat, torture and death of Cuauhtemoc, and concludes as follows:

> La presa di quella gran Corte accadde à 13 Agosto 1521, cento novanta sei anni, dappoichè fu eretta in Monarchìa, la quale ressero undici Re. L'assedio di Messico paragonabile nella disgrazie et nella strage con quello di Gerusalemme, durò settanta cinque giorni, nel qual tempo di dugento milia e più Alleati ne perirono alcune migliaia, e di novecento Spagnuoli più di cento. Il numero de'Messicani morti non si sa . . . I Messicani con tutte le Nazioni, che contribuirono alla loro rovina, restarono a dispetto delle cristiane ed umanissime disposizioni de' Re Cattolici, abbandonati alla miseria, all'oppressione, ed al disprezzo non che degli Spagnuoli, ma anche de' più vili schiavi Africani, e degl'infami lor discendenti, castigando Dio nella miserabil posterità di quelle Nazioni l'inguistizia, la crudeltà, e la superstizione de' loro antenati; orrendo esempio della giustizia divina, e dell instabilità de'Regni della terra.[60]

> [The conquest of this great court fell on the 13th of August 1521, one hundred and ninety-six years after it was established as a monarchy over which had ruled

[59] Cañizares, 2001, ch. 5, *passim*. [60] Clavigero, 1780, III, pp. 232–4.

eleven kings. The siege of Mexico city, comparable in its disasters and slaughters to that of Jerusalem, had lasted seventy-five days, during which time of two hundred thousand allies some thousands had perished, and of nine hundred Spaniards more than one hundred. The number of the Mexican dead is not known . . . The Mexicans, with all the nations who contributed to their downfall, remained subject to the Christian and most humane disposition of the Catholic Kings, abandoned to poverty, oppression and contempt, not only of the Spaniards but of the far more base African slaves and their infamous progeny; God punishing in the wretched posterity of these nations the injustice, cruelty and superstition of their ancestors; an awful example of the divine justice and the instability of the kingdoms of the earth.][61]

Language both Augustinian and ambiguous. The Aztec state and religion may have been reprobate but were not apostate, and the sins of the ancestors explain but do not excuse those of the conquerors. The English translation substitutes rhetoric more Protestant and Enlightened.

Thus, it has been said, in conducting the Spaniards, a polished nation of Europe, to overturn the rude monarchy of the Mexicans, did Providence punish the latter for the injustice, cruelty, and superstition of their ancestors. But there the victors, in one year of merciless massacre, sacrificed more human victims to avarice and ambition, than the Indians during the existence of their empire had devoted in worship to their native gods; there the legislative art of Europe corrected the bloody policy of American tribes, and introduced the ministry of justice, by despoiling Indian caziques of their territories and tributes, torturing them for gold, and enslaving their posterity: and there the mild parental voice of the Christian religion was suborned to terrify confounded savages with the malice of a strange, and by them unprovoked, God; and her gentle arm in violence lifted up, to raze their temples and hospitable habitations, to win every fond relic and revered monument of their ancestry and religion, and divorce them in anguish from the bosom of their country.[62]

Language looking beyond Enlightenment to the edge of recognition that there can be more cultures than one; thoroughly justified, and of course gratifying to our bimillennial demand for a literature of anti-imperialism. But we have reached the end of Clavijero's narrative; what remains is 350 pages of dissertations and appendices, denunciations of de Pauw and respectful but vehement criticisms of Buffon. Robertson is in third place,[63] and Raynal nowhere. Brading and Cañizares have shown us that a 'creole patriotism', backed by a formidable armoury of clerical scholarship, felt itself

[61] Trans. JGAP. It is not clear why the city is described as a court. Clavigero estimates the number of the Mexican dead at between 100,000 and 150,000.
[62] Clavigero, 1806, 111, p. 81.
[63] Ibid. 1806, 111, pp. 285–90, 329–30, 341–6, 378, 396–8.

under attack by a cosmopolitan Enlightenment enlisted by Campomanes and other Spanish ministers; and such a patriot ideology might be expected to produce a modern history of Mexico in addition to the *historia antica* which is all Clavijero had undertaken or attempted. The history of modern Mexico at the end of the eighteenth century should have been a history of its Spanish colonists and their part-indigenous descent, their situation between empire and colony, church and state, *peninsulares*, *criollos* and *mestizos*, Anahuac and New Spain, America and Europe. It may of course be debated whether the resources of eighteenth-century historiography were equal to the task, but the unsatisfied need of such a history can be detected. The regime in Madrid had enlisted an Enlightened historiography which denied Mexico an ancient history, and implied that creoles were incapable of a history of their own; only the modernising reforms of Enlightened ministers could bring either New Spain or Old into the history of modern Europe. Bruce Lenman has suggested that Robertson's dismissive response to Clavijero's criticisms was not merely defensive, but arose from his commitment to the reforming policies of Campomanes praised in the eighth book of the *History of America*.[64] The patriot and Jesuit defence of Mexican history, then, arose not merely from opposition to these reforms, but from the need to find a history in which they could situate and assert themselves. But if they were capable of deploying humanist and clerical scholarship in the reconstruction of an ancient history, but not of presenting and exploring their own history since the Conquest in the context of a modern, it is the less to be wondered at that creole historiography did not, as seems to be the case, live on in the revolutionary and nationalist ideologies of the nineteenth century.[65]

We stand at the brink of a new problem: how the history of a settler people, derived from Europe but living beyond it, was to be constructed by the intellectual means possible in the eighteenth century. While these debates went on in Spanish America, the English colonies north of them were in a condition of revolution and civil war, mutating into a war of independence and an act of foundation. Here there had been no ancient empire, no war of conquest and no body of humanist or clerical scholarship exploring either; neither philosophical nor civil history on the global scale attempted in New Spain. The Anglo-Americans might choose – if a choice was needed – between recounting their history as continuing the political and religious struggles of England, or enlarging them into juristic and philosophical issues taking shape in a wilderness and therefore generating

[64] Lenman, 1997, pp. 204–7. [65] Brading, 1985, and 1990, chs. 24–9.

no history; the first histories of the Revolution are written during the debates over the Constitution.[66] The interplay between baroque and Enlightened historiography is unknown to their history, which may be why the second kind did not take shape among them.

If indigenous peoples were savages, without civil society or civil history, and if colonists had not yet been provided with a civil history by their own writers or by others, it must follow that the New World and its partial resettlement by Europeans could be the subject of philosophical but not of civil history. The American continents and islands had by the end of the eighteenth century a third population, the masses of enslaved Africans, whose condition might be philosophically examined but could certainly be the matter of no history of their own making. It is now argued[67] that Enlightened criticism of empire over non-Europeans was beginning to perceive all human beings as 'cultural agents' – even orientals and savages – but it was another matter to bring every culture within the narrative of a historiography. Perhaps the very notion of history as the union of narrative, philosophy and erudition depended on the existence of writings or other inscriptions – such as creole scholars laboured to discover in the Mexican or Peruvian past – in which agents had recorded, and scholars could infer, what they had done and what they had been; without such writings by self-conscious agents there might be philosophical history but could not be civil. The *histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, offered by Raynal and his collaborators, is therefore a history, both philosophical and political, of Europeans; it denounces them for their invasions and destructions of worlds not belonging to their history, but does not equip those worlds with history, or any positive agency, of their own. In this scenario a crucial role is that played by Europeans who have settled in the New World and there formed self-determinant peoples, now at odds with the states and societies who have sent them there and whose histories they share; whether such peoples have a history, and how it can be written, is the question latent but unanswered in the debate between Spanish Americans and Spanish (or Spanish-promoted) Enlightenment. We begin to see that Enlightenment could deny history to others even as it asserted their humanity. Raynal, Diderot and the other authors of the *Histoire des deux Indes* might find themselves writing a *histoire philosophique* in which Europe was denounced for its imposition of history on a world of nature, but a *histoire politique* in which Europeans alone were actors. What sets them aside from de Pauw

[66] Noble, 1965; Cohen, 1980. [67] Muthu, 2003.

and even Robertson is that they offered a history not of the New World only, but of the oceanically connected societies of the planet: a world shaped by the seaborne empires of the Europeans over savages in the New World, but over ancient and not unknown civilisations in Eurasia. In this history barbarians play little part; the ships of the Europeans do not encounter the shepherds of the steppe; but there is a history both *philosophique* and *politique*, in which Europe both ancient and modern is re-assessed in the light of its explosion beyond itself. In this history Europeans often play the role of barbarians, though not of savages, both in what they have done to others and in what they have been, and are, doing to themselves.

PART IV

The crisis of the seaborne empires

CHAPTER 13

European history and the global ocean

> I am ignorant by what guides the Abbé Raynal was deceived; as the total absence of quotations is the unpardonable blemish of his entertaining history.[1]

This Gibbonian remark tells us what the author of the *Decline and Fall* thought of a work very peripheral to his own, yet capable of illuminating its character. Raynal's early histories of the English parliament and the Dutch stadholderate had attracted Gibbon's unfavourable notice during his second stay at Lausanne – 'c'est un fameux bavard que mon ami Raynal'[2] – and the above words, appearing in 1781, carry on the *érudit*'s complaint against the *philosophe* who will not give his sources; that is what Gibbon meant by 'quotations'. But the next reference to Raynal calls him

> a modern writer, who, with a just confidence, has prefixed to his own history the honourable epithets of political and philosophical;[3]

and though these words introduce another criticism of Raynal's inaccuracy, there is a further notice which suggests approval of his indictment of the West African slave trade.[4] Black Africa was marginal to the Roman world, and therefore to the *Decline and Fall*; but Raynal was one of those making it central to the world in which the *Decline and Fall* was being written and read, and of which he provided a history completed as Gibbon's was appearing and forming a kind of sequel to it. To give its full title, Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal's *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* appeared in many editions, revisions, reprintings and translations following 1770, of which Gibbon came to possess the Hague edition of 1774 and the Geneva edition of 1780.[5] The latter is of special importance to the student of both Raynal and Denis Diderot, because of the number and interest of Diderot's

[1] *DF*, 11, ch. 20, n. 74; Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 748.
[2] *Journal B*, p. 224.
[3] *DF*, 11, ch. 21, n. 163; Womersley, 1994, 1, p. 824.
[4] *DF*, 11, ch. 25, n. 132; Womersley, 1994, 11, p. 1008.
[5] *Library*, p. 234.

contributions to what became (without acknowledgement) a very collaborative work. Though Gibbon's overt references to Raynal seem to occur in volumes of 1781 and later,[6] the *Histoire des deux Indes*, as it became known for short, might have been in his hands from an early date in the making of the *Decline and Fall*, and both Diderot – of whose co-authorship Gibbon's text gives no sign that he was aware – and Raynal give it a character antithetical to that of his own work and therefore important to our understanding of the latter.

The *Decline and Fall* was planned to end with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453; the *Histoire des deux Indes* begins with the circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese in 1497–8, an event which it connects significantly with the former. It is therefore a work of modern history, in our sense which defines 'modern' as 'post-medieval'; as we have seen, Gibbon chose to use the term in its older sense of 'post-ancient' and to fix 'modern history' as beginning with the alliance of the Papacy with the kingdom of the Franks; and this was the point at which Voltaire chose to begin the *Essai sur les Moeurs* and the *Histoire Générale*. The problem of terminology reminds us that the primary theme of Enlightened historiography was the Christian millennium, the eleven or so centuries separating the first Constantine from the last or the nine separating Charlemagne from Louis XIV. It proceeded through the establishment and then the collapse of the partnership of empire and church to the fall of Constantinople in eastern Europe, followed by the revival of letters, the supersession of military feudalism, the advent of gunpowder, the printing press and oceanic navigation, seen as transforming western European culture and its place in the history of the world. Voltaire had treated the history of the Christian millennium as a nightmare of barbarism and religion, less a decline from classical antiquity than a long darkness which preceded the supersession of antiquity in neo-classical and enlightened modernity. The paradox of Gibbon, we are beginning to find, is that while he found the Enlightened vision in no way uncongenial, he nevertheless devoted the best years of his life, and five of his six volumes, to writing the history of the Christian millennium, in the Greek and Arab east no less than the Latin west, as a tale possessing its own beginning, middle and end.

Raynal, and those he enlisted to help him, produced a history of the post-medieval world as they saw it. Of the great technological breakthroughs which had ended the feudal and papal era, the compass and gunpowder had combined to generate a world-system held together by oceanic commerce

[6] References are in Womersley, 1994, III, p. 1256.

in European hands. To Enlightened historians without exception – indeed by definition – the advent of a commerce-generating civil society in all parts of what they chose to term 'Europe' was the guarantee that neither ancient empire, medieval empire and papacy, nor early modern universal monarchy and religious warfare, would return to plague them, and they knew that oceanic commerce and European empire in other continents were part of their modern world. The *Histoire des deux Indes* is based on this vision, and therefore claims attention as one of the first attempts to write history as that of a world-system. As a history *des établissements et du commerce des Européens*, it is a history of the Europeans' conquest of the planetary ocean and their seaborne domination over every other society and culture in the world; a history also – though we shall have to ask within what constraints – of these other societies as European domination affected, destroyed or transformed them. Where the *Decline and Fall* becomes a history written on a planetary scale – we have begun to consider when this happens and how – it is a history of the 'Old World', of Afro-Eurasia[7] conceived as linking the Greco-Latin, Arab–Iranian and Chinese cultural regions, and as given such systemic unity as it possesses by land routes rather than by oceanic navigation; by caravan journeys but far more by the violent mass movements of de Guignes's Huns, Turks and Mongols: nomadic horsemen from Central Asia, uncontrolled by the empire of the *états policés*. It is – and Gibbon knew this – a history of an age of conquests, of which the present age of commerce was intended to be the modern replacement. So far, then, the *Decline and Fall* and the *Histoire des deux Indes* stand in a sequential relationship, the latter being completed first, but differ profoundly in focus, emphasis and theme.

The *Histoire des deux Indes* is thus a history of commerce – apparently not Gibbon's favourite; he seems to have preferred Adam Anderson's *Historical and Chronological Deduction of the Origins of Commerce* (1764)[8] – and of Enlightenment, of which it presents commerce, and especially oceanic commerce, as a motor force. It therefore presents, in language which deserves attention, the historical self-image of Enlightenment already framed in the *Essai sur les Moeurs*: a narrative Eurasian in scope, originating with the magianisms and monotheisms of remote antiquity, capable of attempting to include Hinduism in that antiquity, and looking towards Confucianism as

[7] The African component consists of Mediterranean Africa: Roman Africa and Mauretania (Arab Ifriqiyah and Maghrib), Libya and Egypt. Gibbon's description follows the Nile and Red Sea as far as Ethiopia (vol. VI, ch. 47) but not into sub-Saharan Black Africa. Racial prejudice played some part in excluding the latter from history, and the narratives he sought to follow did not include it.

[8] Womersley, 1994, III, pp. 1190–1.

a rational alternative, but focusing as it advanced upon events increasingly western and a modernity overwhelmingly European. When the prehistory of commerce and Enlightenment is over and the Europeans explode into the planetary ocean, their first encounters are with cultures which they, or we, already know as ancient or as rooted in antiquity as we define it: with Ottoman, Islamic, Hindu and Chinese civilisations possessing written histories. Though da Gama sailed some years after Columbus, Raynal's first books are devoted to the encounter with the Indian Ocean and European domination of it. Here there are histories in encounter, histories of others already written and in process, and we shall ask whether Enlightened historiography was capable either of integrating these in its own vision of history or of narrating them as going on independently of it.

The first section of the *Histoire* – the first of four volumes in the 1780 edition – is concerned with the 'East Indies'; that is, with the European irruption into the Indian Ocean, Indonesia and the China Seas, its impact on Asian societies and the effects of its commerce on the European states conducting it. With the next three volumes, however, we turn to the 'New World', to South America, the Caribbean islands, and North America in that order, and what is entitled an *histoire des deux Indes* becomes increasingly an *histoire des deux mondes*; it is the discovery by Europeans of a *nouveau monde* which is assessed as creating a new epoch in the history of the human race, and post-modern readers may term it, at will, either anti-colonialist or colonialist that Raynal and his team take it on themselves to decide whether this has been a benefit or disaster for humanity.

The *Histoire* develops the late Enlightened obsession with 'happiness', and constantly asks whether 'commerce', the only force it recognises as capable of creating happiness in history, is not equally the creator of unhappiness; so that 'nature' and 'history', *l'homme sauvage* and *l'homme policé* or *civilisé*, can be set in opposition to one another, and the question asked whether humanity is the better for having entered upon the enterprise of history at all. The opposition between history and philosophy has recurred, and we are surrounded by the discourse not merely of d'Alembert, but of Diderot and Rousseau, which Gibbon never engaged in or recognised. That is in itself a reason for confronting the text of the *Histoire des deux Indes* on our way into that of the *Decline and Fall*; the historiography of the *philosophes* went this way, that from which Gibbon emerged another.

If we are to speak of an 'Enlightenment project' of inducing Europeans to substitute a culture based on manners and commerce for one given to disputing its religious beliefs and warring over them, it is evident that this enterprise here passed a point of no return at which it became ambivalent

regarding the enterprise of civilisation itself. The later volumes of the *Histoire des deux Indes* display this ambivalence in the illocutions and perlocutions which they contain. As a project for the re-ordering of the world-system of commerce on which Enlightenment is seen to depend – it is not clear whether peoples not European are to play any active role in either commerce or Enlightenment – there are signs of an intention to make this project an instrument of state power, of rebuilding a strong French navy and constructing a Franco-Spanish alliance and a league of European states in a war of revenge against Great Britain designed to reverse the decisions of 1763. Side by side with this, however, the *Histoire* issues a series of calls to the peoples of Europe and perhaps the world, expressed in a quasi-revolutionary language of sentiment, to imagine and pursue a juster and happier society; as if the errors not only of the Christian and feudal past, but of the conquistador behaviour of Europe in its contacts with the *deux Indes* and the *nouveau monde*, had saddled them with regimes under which virtue and felicity had become impossible. In both these ways, and in the contradictions between them, the *Histoire* helped create – and was itself created by – the intellectual climate of the European and global War of American Independence; the climate in which Gibbon lived, and lived close to the centres of political power and action, while he wrote and published at least half of the volumes of the *Decline and Fall*. There may have been no direct connection between his awareness of the crisis of ancient empire of which he wrote and that of the crisis of commercial empire in which he lived; but we are entitled to compare his historiography with one directly aimed at producing and questioning the contemporary crisis. And since the *Decline and Fall* establishes contacts between the Roman and the Persian, Central Asian, Arab and Chinese worlds, we may learn about its resources for constructing such a history by comparing them with those of the *Histoire des deux Indes* for constructing history in the age of oceanic encounter. The modern was known to be an outcome of the ancient. A stumbling-block must be reached, however, when Raynal, Diderot and in his absence Rousseau, oppose history to nature; a step Gibbon was never interested in taking.

The *Histoire des deux Indes* is a work of multiple authorship and several recensions. Raynal enlisted Diderot to help him, and modern research has revealed what passages were from the latter's hand.[9] They are numerous and increased in number as the work went through various

[9] Duchet, 1978, gives a checklist of Diderot's contributions. Cp. Gianluigi Goggi, *Pensées détachées: Contributions á l' Histoire des deux Indes,* Siena, 1976, not employed here. For English translations of some of them, see Mason and Wokler (eds.), 1992.

editions, down to at latest 1780; they are highly emotional in nature, and a few years later were described in the journal *Révolutions de Paris* as 'grandes tirades', and by the critic Mallet du Pan, less kindly, as 'amplifications convulsives'.[10] Much scholarly work has gone on, and continues, on this large and diverse text, and a complete critical edition is in process at the time of writing.[11] Others may have contributed, and other texts may have been used. It may therefore be possible to decompose the *Histoire* into the writings of Diderot and Raynal (to name no other contributors) and examine the several intentions and performances which they fed into it. Though necessary and valuable, that approach will not be attempted here. Instead, an attempt will be made to consider the text as a joint product, which the authors (whoever they were) achieved among them; to consider what it says, whether or not it expresses the intention of any particular author; to read it as uttering statements in eighteenth-century historical discourse, which inform us of what could be and was being communicated to the intelligence of an eighteenth-century reader. For this reason as little as possible will be said of authorial intention or authorial identity, and even the authorial *moi* who speaks, eloquently and often tearfully, from time to time will be considered – as was the *vous* of the *Essai sur les Moeurs*[12] – as a constructed *persona*, not invariably the mouthpiece of Raynal, Diderot or anyone else. The aim will be to explore the frontiers of discourse reached in a very inventive and ambitious *œuvre*.[13]

The 1780 edition of the *Histoire des deux Indes* is bibliographically the best organised. Its four volumes deal successively with European expansion into the Indian Ocean and further Asia; into Mexico, Peru, Brazil and the southern American continent at large; into the *grand archipel* of the Caribbean, which the authors call *les Antilles* and we 'the West Indies'; and finally, into the northern continent between the Gulf of Mexico and Hudson Bay, where the phenomena constituting 'the American Revolution' begin coming into view. The series as a whole opens with an *avertissement* which rather cautiously declares, in language recalling Robertson's:

> Le globe est actuellement ensanglanté par une guerre qui a donné, qui a oté des établissements utiles aux Puissances belligérantes. Lorsque les Traités auront confirmé ces conquêtes ou ces pertes, il sera temps d'annoncer ces révolutions.[14]

[10] Duchet, 1978, pp. 29–30.
[11] Announced by the Voltaire Foundation (Oxford) as the work of an editorial committee comprising Anthony Strugnell, C. P. Courtney, Gianluigi Goggi and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink.
[12] NCG, pp. 102, 121, 125–6, 129, 133.
[13] Pocock, 2000, is an introductory survey of the *Histoire*.
[14] HDI, 1, p. vii ('Avertissement').

[The globe is at present bleeding from a war which has both conferred and transferred valuable colonial possessions among belligerent powers. When treaties shall have confirmed these conquests and losses, it will be time to take stock of the revolutions resulting from them.][15]

And indeed the revolution which created the United States of America as a power independent of Europe will play an ambiguous role to the end of the *Histoire*. It is unclear whether the work is being constructed to introduce it; a *moi* who may be Raynal announces that his remaining energies will be consecrated to a history of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the ensuing global diaspora of the Huguenots.[16] The intention of the *Histoire*, as declared in the ensuing introduction, is to examine and question the creation of a European-dominated global system as a major event transforming and unifying world history.

Alors a commencé une revolution dans le commerce, dans la puissance des nations, dans les mœurs, l'industrie et le gouvernement de tous les peuples. C'est à ce moment que les hommes des contrées plus éloignées se sont rapprochés par de nouveaux rapports et de nouveaux besoins ... Par-tout les hommes ont fait un échange mutuel de leurs opinions, de leurs usages, de leurs maladies, de leurs remèdes, de leurs vertus et de leurs vices.

Tout est changé, et doit changer encore. Mais les révolutions passées et celles qui doivent suivre, ont-elles été, seront-elles utiles à la nature humaine? L'homme leur devra-t-il un jour plus de tranquilité, de bonheur et de plaisir? Son état sera-t-il meilleur, ou ne sera-t-il que changé?[17]

[It gave rise to a revolution in the commerce, and in the power of nations; as well as in the manners, industry, and government of the whole world. At this period, new connections were formed by the inhabitants of the most distant regions, for the supply of wants they had never before experienced ... A general intercourse of opinions, laws and customs, diseases and remedies, virtues and vices, was established among men.

Every thing has changed, and must change again. But it is a question, whether the revolutions that are past, or those which must hereafter take place, have been, or can be, of any utility to the human race. Will they ever add to the tranquility, the happiness, and the pleasures of mankind? Can they improve our present state, or do they only change it?][18]

This interrogation of history must be carried out by means of a survey of the globe as a whole, which will return to fix attention on the condition of

[15] Trans. JGAP. [16] HDI, 1, p. viii. No such work seems to have appeared.

[17] Ibid. 1, pp. 1–2.

[18] Justamond, 1, pp. 1–2. This translator produced an English translation of the *Histoire* as successive French editions appeared, from a date as early as 1774. The edition of 1798, used here and throughout, carries (p. vii) a note stating that, as Raynal's edition of 1780 is virtually a new work, the translation has been entirely rewritten.

Europe before and after the discoveries. It is a task of terrifying magnitude, and a *moi* who seems definitely to have been constructed by Diderot now intervenes to describe what it has done to its author, employing the self-dramatising language of the age of sentiment, for which we may have little taste, but which accounts for much of the *Histoire*'s best-seller success in the decade before 1789.

O vérité sainte! C'est toi seule qui j'ai respectée. Si mon ouvrage trouve encore quelques lecteurs dans les siècles à venir, je veux qu'en voyant combien j'ai été dégagé de passions et de préjugés, ils ignorent la contrée ou je pris naissance; sous quel gouvernement je vivois; quelles fonctions j'exerçois dans mon pays; quel culte je professai; je veux qu'ils me croient tous leur concitoyen et leur ami. Le premier soin, le premier devoir, quand on traite des matières importantes au bonheur des hommes, ce doit être de purger son âme de toute crainte, de toute espérance. Elevé au-dessus de toutes les considerations humaines, c'est alors qu'on plane au-dessus de l'atmosphère, et qu'on voit le globe au-dessous de soi . . . C'est-là que j'ai pu véritablement m'écrier: je suis libre, et me sentir au niveau de mon sujet. C'est-là enfin que, voyant à mes pieds ces belles contrées où fleurissent les sciences et les arts et que les ténèbres de la barbarie avoient si long-temps occupées, je me suis demandé: qui est-ce qui a creusé ces canaux? Qui est-ce qui a desseché ces plaines? Qui est-ce qui a fondé ces villes? Qui est-ce qui a rassemblé, vêtu, civilisé ces peuples? Et qu'alors toutes les voix des hommes éclairés qui sont parmi elles m'ont répondu: c'est le commerce, c'est le commerce.[19]

[Oh holy Truth! Thou hast been the sole object of my veneration! If, in after ages, this work should still be read, it is my wish, that, while my readers perceive how much I am divested from passions and prejudice, they should be ignorant of the kingdom which gave me birth, of the government under which I lived, of the profession I followed in my country, and of the religious faith I professed: it is my wish, that they should only consider me as their fellow-citizen and their friend. The first duty that is incumbent upon us, the first care we ought to attend to, when we treat of things important to the happiness of mankind, is to expel from our minds every idea of hope or fear. Raised above all human considerations, it is then we soar above the atmosphere, and behold the globe beneath us . . . From thence it is, that I have been enabled to cry out, I am free, and feel myself upon a level with the subject I treat. It is from thence, in a word, that, viewing those beautiful regions in which the arts and sciences flourish, and which have been for so long a time obscured by ignorance and barbarism, I have said to myself: Who is it that hath digged these canals? Who is it that hath dried up these plains? Who is it that hath founded these cities? Who is it that hath collected, clothed, and civilised these people? Then have I heard the voice of all the enlightened men among them, who have answered: This is the effect of commerce.][20]

[19] HDI, 1, p. 3. Ascribed to Diderot by Duchet, 1978, p. 65.
[20] Justamond, 1, pp. 3–4.

There are to be many more of these *grandes tirades*. Gibbon's *moi*, taking shape as early as the *Essai sur l'Étude de la Littérature*, invariably spoke in a discourse of irony, which came to express a Burkean mistrust of the discourse of reason and sentiment. He would have regarded this *ami des hommes*, flying above history[21] like an angel or an Asmodeus, as potentially one of those tyrants of the intellect who dragged the lesser faculties at the wheels of a triumphal chariot;[22] but the discourse of sentiment is, as much as that of irony, a response to the contradictions of history. The paean to commerce with which the passage quoted closes is by no means simply triumphal. The barbarians who throw civilisations into darkness can be European conquistadors, and the *Histoire* is about to tell the tale of a world-system which began as plunder and proceeded through slavery and monopoly, and may never become a global partnership in active commerce at all. Even highly civilised commercial societies are capable of self-corruption, and the discourse of sentiment can do no more than challenge them to escape this fate.

With commerce as the motor of civilisation, the journey through ancient to modern begins. The *Histoire* treats commerce as a Mediterranean discovery, made successively by Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans, and does not yet ask whether it might have been created by other ship-borne peoples in other seas of the world. Mediterranean commerce, however, was limited to a single basin, and after the perhaps lamentable destruction of Carthage the land-bound and ferocious Romans made the mistake of unifying their ecumene by conquest and the despotism of empire.[23] Constructed only to decline and fall, the Roman achievement serves as prelude to the contrast between ancient and modern.

Si l'on fait attention que l'Europe jouit de toutes les connoissances des Grecs, que son commerce est infiniment plus étendu, que notre imagination se porte sur des objets plus grands et plus variés depuis les progrès de la navigation; on sera étonné que nous n'ayons pas sur eux la supériorité la plus decidé. Mais il faut observer que, lorsque ce people connut les arts et le commerce, il sortoit, pour ainsi dire, des mains de la nature, et avoit toute l'énergie nécessaire pour cultiver les dons qu'il en reçevoit; au lieu que les nations de l'Europe étoient asservies à des loix et à des institutions extravagantes. Dans la Grèce, le commerce trouva des hommes; en Europe, il trouva des esclaves. A mesure que nous avons ouvert les yeux sur les absurdités de nos institutions, nous nous sommes occupés à les corriger, mais sans oser jamais renverser entièrement l'édifice. Nous avons remédié à des abus par des abus nouveaux; et à force d'étayer, de reformer, de pallier, nous avons mis

[21] Gibbon permits himself to do so once: in the opening sentence of the *Decline and Fall*'s fiftieth chapter (Womersley, III, p. 151).
[22] EEG, pp. 215–16, 228–9. [23] HDI, I, pp. 4–7.

dans nos mœurs plus de contradictions, qu'il n'y en a chez les peuples les plus barbares.[24]

[If we consider that the Europeans have the advantage of all the knowledge of the Greeks; that their commerce is infinitely more extensive; that since the improvements in navigation, their ideas are directed to greater and more various objects; it is astonishing that they should not have the most palpable superiority over them. But it must be observed, that when these people arrived at the knowledge of the arts and of trade, they were just produced, as it were, from the hands of Nature, and had all the powers necessary to improve the talents she had given them; whereas the European nations were subject to laws and institutions of an extravagant nature. In Greece, the arts of trade met with men; in Europe, with slaves. Whenever the absurdities of our institutions have been pointed out, we have taken pains to correct them, without ever daring totally to overthrow the edifice. We have remedied some abuses, by introducing others; and, in our efforts to support, reform and palliate, we have adopted more contradictions and absurdities in our manners, than are to be found among the most barbarous people.][25]

The location and extent of this 'Europe' are (as usual) never precisely stated, but neither geographically nor historically is it continuous, let alone identical, with the Mediterranean-Nilotic-Mesopotamian world of classical antiquity. The assumption that the Greeks had no prehistory, that before them was nothing but nature, that they came into the world unencumbered by history, can easily and justifiably be denounced as a specimen of European cultural arrogance; but it is no less the introduction to a radical criticism of 'European' civilisation, of which a portrayal of it as intensely self-critical is paradoxically a part. 'Europe' is trans-Alpine, Rhenish and Atlantic, as well as Mediterranean (we learn later in the *Histoire* that France is at its centre); it is the creation of Gallic, German and Scythian as well as Mediterranean peoples, and is therefore half-barbarian. Above all, it is a feudal, theological and ecclesiastical half-civilisation, whose history is a history of barbarism and religion; and its struggle to emancipate itself from this past has left it confused and profoundly self-mistrustful. The *Histoire* is identifying, and at the same time continuing, the paradox that the most arrogant of civilisations is at the same time the most radically given to criticism of itself. The culture that conquers, as we saw with Voltaire, is the culture that disputes.

The Introduction proceeds through a succession of criticisms of Montesquieu, for minimising the role of Christianity in the Roman decline and maximising its role in the civilising of feudal Europe; operations the *Histoire* intends to reverse.[26] It was the inaccuracy with which these

[24] Ibid. 1, p. 6. [25] Justamond, 1, p. 7. [26] HDI, 1, pp. 7, 14–15.

criticisms were stated that moved Gibbon to the remark prefixed to this chapter, and we may note the determination of the *Histoire*'s authors that Christianity shall have done nothing right. If Pope Alexander III pronounced that no Christian ought to be enslaved, he showed himself no lover of humanity by failing to pronounce that no man should be;[27] at one step we are in the censorious and resentful world that we ourselves inhabit, and it is possible to write of Raynal and Diderot as if they were our contemporaries. The story reaches the point where the circumnavigation of Africa is about to occur, and Europe is about to free itself of the darkness of barbarism and religion. Philosophy and letters did this together, we learn, but philosophy might have done it alone, as the arts never could; they decorated the edifice of religion, and the papacy which imprisoned Galileo exalted Tasso.[28] Gibbon might not have disagreed; he doubted whether the arts fostered liberty, even though they died under despotism; there was the problem of their Augustan and Medicean efflorescences.[29] The *Histoire*, however, has a larger strategy. It is important that the enlightenment of Europe should barely have begun when the Spanish and Portuguese voyages occur; not only because they are to be more a cause of that enlightenment than its effect, but because the European navigators are to be represented as themselves Gothic or barbarian. They are conquistadors, not yet *commerçants*; their voyages, to India especially, are continuations of the Crusades and the *Reconquista*, undertaken out of a warrior ethos, a spirit of fanaticism and a lust for gold.[30] Yet there is here an unexhausted paradox; the Crusades, while the ultimate expression of useless enthusiasm, were at the same time the occasion of Venetian and Genoese reopening of commerce with Asia – without which even philosophy could have done very little – and the conquistadors created a global commerce without at all understanding what they were doing.

The decision to present the Portuguese voyages as a continuation of the wars between Latin Christendom ('Europe') and western Islam provides the *Histoire* with its setting in geopolitics (or 'universal history' in the modern sense of the term). The Portuguese outflank the Ottomans (and the Venetians) by circumnavigating Africa and taking them in the rear; and the overrunning of the Indian Ocean gives the Europeans mastery of the world's trade and an encounter with the civilisations of Asia. It takes some chapters before we understand this in full, since a geographic description of Asia, and – for reasons to be considered – an account of the oldest of

[27] Ibid. 1, p. 15. [28] Ibid. 1, pp. 21–2. [29] EEG, pp. 127–8.
[30] HDI, 1, pp. 96–8 (Book 1, ch. XVIII: 'Causes de la grande énergie des Portugais').

its ancient civilisations, have to be given first. The description of Asia is given in maritime perspective. Russian cartography, which has mapped the central Eurasian landmass, is of less significance than the oceanography which divides the Indian Ocean and the China Seas into a series of basins: the Persian Gulf, the Bay of Bengal, the Indonesian archipelago – which links Asia with a presumably post-Cookian *continent austral* – Japan and the Marianas, and the Kuriles and Kamchatka completing the link with Russia.[31] These basins are not mere cartographic devices; each has its commerce and is known – though in decreasing order – by the land-based civilisations to which it gives the sea-peoples access. Similarly, a modern scholar has written of 'the Afro-Eurasian chain of seas which led from the north-west Atlantic and the Mediterranean through the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea';[32] and the *Histoire*, on whatever sources it may be drawing, is on the brink of the Pacific as well as the Atlantic. Nor is its perspective crudely determined by the European empire over continents by way of oceans which is its subject. There was a global commerce, from Africa to China, centred in the Indian Ocean before the Europeans came to seize it, and this was largely the creation of a sea-borne Islam. The voyage of da Gama becomes epochal in world history in the light of this fact.

The *Histoire* now recognises two regions of maritime commerce in the ancient world; that of the Chinese with what they termed Nanyang is not mentioned. There remain the eastern Mediterranean and the western Indian Ocean, consisting of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. The possible link between them is the Egyptian isthmus – seen in a perspective far from Afrocentric – and even before Alexander:

> L'Egypte, que nous regardons comme la mère de toutes les antiquités historiques, la première source de la police, le berceau des sciences et des arts; l'Egypte, après avoir restée durant les siècles isolée du reste de la terre, que sa sagesse dédaignoit, connut et pratiqua la navigation. Ses habitants negligèrent long-temps la Mediterranée ou sans doute, ils n'apperçevoient pas de grands avantages, pour tourner leurs voiles vers la mer des Indes, qui étoient le vrai canal des richesses.[33]

> [Egypt, which is considered as the parent of all historical antiquities, the source of policy, and the nursery of arts and sciences, after having remained for ages in a state of separation from the rest of the world, who were held in contempt by this wise country, understood and practised navigation. The inhabitants had long neglected the Mediterranean, where they did not certainly expect any great advantages, and directed their course towards the Indian Ocean, which was the true channel of wealth.][34]

[31] Ibid. 1, pp. 28–30 (Book 1, ch. v).
[32] Hodgson, 1993, p. 18.
[33] HDI, 1, p. 71 (Book 1, ch. x1).
[34] Justamond, 1, pp. 81–2.

This is not an Africanist's Egypt, drawing its significance from the Nile valley, but the diffusionist's Egypt, situated as mediator between all civilisations including its own. The image of an Indo-Egyptian trade raises the problem of the place of the Roman empire and world commerce in one another's history.

Tant que les Romains eurent assez de vertu pour conserver la puissance que leurs ancêtres avoient acquise, l'Egypte contribua beaucoup à soutenir la majesté de l'empire, par les richesses des Indes qu'elle y faisoit couler. Mais l'embonpoint de luxe est une maladie qui annonce la décadence des forces. Ce grand empire tomba par sa propre pesanteur; semblable aux leviers de bois ou de métal, dont l'extrême longueur fait la foiblesse. Il se rompit, et il en résulta deux grands débris.[35]

[While the Romans had virtue enough to preserve the power acquired by their ancestors, Egypt contributed greatly to support the dignity of the empire by the riches it poured into it from India. But the fullness of luxury, like the corpulency of the body, is a symptom of approaching decay. This vast empire sunk under its own weight, and, like levers of wood or metal, whose excessive length contributes to their weakness, it broke, and was divided into two immense parts.][36]

Gibbon might have had these words, or others like them, in mind when he wrote and later inserted in the *Decline and Fall* the sentence 'as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous structure yielded to the pressure of its own weight'.[37] The *Histoire* raises further questions: whether luxury is the effect of commerce, or that which deprives commerce of its real fruitfulness; whether the Indian trade imported luxury into the Roman moral economy. With the collapse of the unified empire, Egypt passed under Byzantine control, then Arab, then under a combination of Mamelukes and Venetians;[38] and we approach the point where we see the Portuguese circumnavigation in the full light of world-historical drama.

La conquête de l'Egypte par les Turcs, quelques années après, rendit nécessaires de plus grandes précautions. Les hommes de génie auxquels il fut donné de saisir la chaîne des événements qui avoient précédé et suivi le passage du cap de Bonne-Espérance, de porter des conjectures profondes sur les bouleversements que ce nouveau chemin de navigation devoit prévenir, ne purent s'empêcher de regarder cette fameuse découverte comme la plus grande époque de l'histoire du monde.[39]

[The conquest of Egypt by the Turks, a few years after, made it requisite to act with the greater precaution. Men of genius, whose minds were capable of pursuing

[35] HDI, I, p. 74. [36] Justamond, I, p. 85.
[37] DF, III, ch. 38 ('General Observations on the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West'). Womersley, 1994, II, p. 509.
[38] HDI, I, pp. 76–7. [39] Ibid. I, p. 81.

the series of events which had preceded and followed the discovery of the passage by the Cape of Good Hope, and of forming deep conjectures concerning the revolutions which this new track of navigation must necessarily prevent, could not help considering this remarkable transaction as the most important era in the history of the world.][40]

L'Europe commençoit à peine à respirer et à secouer le joug de la servitude qui avoit avili ses habitants depuis les conquêtes des Romains et l'établissement des loix féodales . . . Sans la découverte de Vasco de Gama, le flambeau de la liberté s'étaigneroit de nouveau, et peut-être pour toujours. Les Turcs alloient remplacer ces nations féroces, qui, des extrémités de la terre, étoient venus remplacer les Romains, pour devenir, comme eux, le fléau du genre-humain; et à nos barbares institutions, auroit succédé un joug plus pesant encore. Cet événement étoit inévitable, si les farouches vainqueurs de l'Egypte n'eussent été repoussés par les Portugais dans les différentes éxpeditions qu'ils tenterent dans l'Inde. Les richesses de l'Asie leur assuroient celles de l'Europe. Maîtres de tout le commerce du monde, ils auroient eu nécessairement la plus redoutable marine qu'on eût jamais vue. Quels obstacles auroient pu arrêter alors sur notre continent ce peuple, qui étoit conquérant par la nature de sa religion et de sa politique?[41]

[Europe had but just begun to recover its strength, and to shake off the yoke of slavery, which had disgraced its inhabitants from the time of the Roman conquests down to the institution of the feudal laws . . . If Vasco da Gama had not made his discoveries, the spirit of liberty would have been again extinguished, and probably, without hopes of a revival. The Turks were upon the point of expelling those savage nations, who, pouring from the extremities of the globe, had driven out the Romans, to become, like them, the scourges of human kind; and our barbarous institutions would have been supplanted by oppressions still more intolerable. This must inevitably have been the case, if the savage conquerors of Egypt had not been repulsed by the Portuguese, in their several expeditions to India. Their possession of the riches of Asia would have secured their claim to those of Europe. As the trade of the whole world would have been in their hands, they must consequently have had the greatest maritime force that ever had been known. What opposition could our continent then have made to the progress of a people whose religion and policy equally inspired them with the idea of conquest?][42]

Our translation is not using the word 'savage' in its philosophical sense, but as a rendering of *féroce* and *farouche*. The nations to which these epithets are applied, however, seem not to be Franks or Slavs alone, but their European descendants in general. The *Histoire* goes on to explain that Europe was torn not only by warfare still feudal, but by the profound dissensions between secular and spiritual authority which had hamstrung Christian civilisation.

[40] Justamond, 1, p. 93. By 'prevent' he presumably meant 'prepare'.
[41] HDI, 1, pp. 81–2 (Book 1, ch. XIII). [42] Justamond, 1, p. 94.

Dans presque tout l'Europe, une religion étrangère au gouvernement, et dont les premiers pas se sont presque toujours faits à son insu; une morale répandue sans ordre, sans précision, dans les livres obscurs et susceptibles d'une seule bonne interprétation, entre une infinité de mauvaises, une autorité en proie aux prêtres et aux souverains, qui se disputent tour-à-tour le droit de commander aux hommes; des loix politiques et civiles sans cesse en contradiction avec la religion dominante, qui condamne l'inégalité et l'ambition; une administration inquiète et entreprenante, qui, pour dominer avec plus d'empire, oppose continuellement une partie de l'état à l'autre partie; tous ces germes de trouble doivent entretenir dans les esprits une fermentation violente. Est-il surprenant qu'au milieu de ces mouvements, la nature s'éveille et crie au fond des cœurs, *L'homme est né libre*?[43]

[Throughout almost all Europe, a religion foreign to government, and introduced without its patronage; rules of morality dispersed without order or precision in obscure writings, capable of an endless variety of interpretations;[44] authority engrossed by priests and princes, who are perpetually contesting their right to rule over their fellow-creatures; political and civil institutions daily formed in contradiction to the prevailing religion, which condemns ambition and inequality of rank; a turbulent and enterprising administration, which, in order to tyrannize with a higher hand, is perpetually setting one part of the state against the other: all these principles of discord must necessarily keep the minds of men in constant agitation. Is it surprising that on the view of this tumultuous scene, nature, alarmed, should rise up in our hearts, and cry out, 'Is man born free'?][45]

It is something of a question whether the *grido de libertad* could have been sounded anywhere not tormented by the intolerable division of authority which the Enlightened writers hated so much. There had been much praise of Islam for its identification of law and prophecy, its refusal to provide priests with an independent spiritual substance as the foundation of their authority; but without such a substance and the discovery of its falsity, could liberty ensue?

En effet, de tous les systêmes politiques et religieux qui affligent l'espèce humaine, il n'en est point qui laisse moins de carrière à la liberté que celui des Musulmans . . . sous le joug d'une religion qui consacra la tyrannie, en fondant le trône sur l'autel; qui semble imposer silence à l'ambition, en permettant la volupté; qui favorise la paresse naturelle, en interdisant les opérations de l'esprit; il n'y a point d'espérance pour les grandes révolutions. Aussi les Turcs, qui égorgent si souvent leur maître, n'ont-ils jamais pensé à changer leur gouvernement. Cette idée est au-dessus de leurs ames ennervées et corrompues. C'en étoit donc fait de la liberté du monde entier; elle étoit perdue, si le peuple de la chrétienté le plus superstitieux, et peut-être le plus esclave, n'eût arrêté le progrès du fanatisme des Musulmans, et brisé le cours

[43] HDI, 1, p. 82. [44] The English rejects the caution of the censorable French.
[45] Justamond, 1, p. 95; he should have written 'Man is born free'.

impétueux de leurs conquêtes, en leur coupant le nerf des richesses. Albuquerque fit plus. Après avoir pris des mesures efficaces pour qu'aucun vaisseau ne pût passer de la mer d'Arabie dans les mers des Indes, il chercha à se donner l'empire du golfe Persique.[46]

[There is not one, indeed, among all the political and religious systems that oppress mankind, which allows so little scope to liberty as that of the Musselmen . . . when men once become slaves to a religion which consecrates tyranny by establishing the throne upon the altar; which seems to check the sallies of ambition by encouraging voluptuousness; and cherishes a spirit of indolence, by forbidding the exercise of the understanding; there is no reason to hope for any considerable revolutions. Thus the Turks, who frequently strangle their master, have never entertained a thought of changing their government. This is an idea beyond the reach of minds enervated and corrupted like theirs. The whole world would, therefore, have lost its liberty, had not the most superstitious, and, perhaps, the most enslaved nation in Christendom checked the progress of the fanaticism of the Mohammedans, and put a stop to the career of their victories, by depriving them of those sources of wealth which were necessary to the success of their enterprises. Albuquerque went still further; not satisfied with having taken effectual measures to prevent any vessel from passing from the Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean, he attempted to acquire the command of the Persian Gulf.][47]

The stereotype of oriental despotism has moved massively into place, but to say so does not quite take away the question of whether the concept or the practice of liberty could have existed without the calamitous late antique and European habit of engaging in dispute over insoluble problems; and to ask that is to ask ironically whether Enlightened authors were not undermining their own enterprise.

Meanwhile, the Portuguese have removed a threat to the outlying civilisation of Europe by disrupting the natural unity of Mediterranean and Indian Ocean commerce through the isthmus of Suez. It is a limited achievement, which some late twentieth-century historians insist was of passing significance and preceded by about a century the real establishment of European control in the Indian Ocean.[48] They have been able to distract the Ottoman Turks from restoring the older unity of commerce because they have been aided by the compass to circumnavigate Africa, as have neither the coastal-sailing Indo-Arabs – though these have established themselves as far south as Zanzibar on the African coast – nor the compass-aided Chinese (never mentioned here, perhaps because the authors of the *Histoire* did not know of Cheng Ho's voyage to the Horn of Africa[49]). Where the

[46] HDI, I, pp. 82–3. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 66.
[47] Justamond, I, pp. 94–5. [48] E.g., Hodgson, 1993, pp. 98–9 and n. 1.
[49] Gibbon, however, had heard of it, but with scepticism; DF, IV, ch. 40; Womersley, II, p. 582.

landlocked Mediterranean ecumene of Rome was invaded by horsemen from the unknown spaces of Central Asia, the Muslim ecumene of the Indian Ocean has been invaded by shipmen not unknown in themselves, but arriving unexpectedly out of oceanic space which they can traverse better than others. This has transformed the relations between the civilisations of Eurasia by giving the remote and fabulous Europeans simultaneous access to every one of them where it meets the sea; but it does not mean that an enlightened and progressive Europe is in contact with a priest-governed and stagnant Asia. Rather, a set of vikings have arrived from their harbourages in the far north-west; Europe is the Scandinavia of Afro-Eurasia. The *Histoire* is very clear that the Europeans who broke into the planetary ocean were semi-barbarous, not yet civilised by commerce, and it expects major *révolutions* still to shake the world before an enlightened global commerce can be established, if this is going to happen at all. The thinking of Raynal and Diderot was Eurocentric, not because they thought Europe was civilised and the rest of the world barbaric, but because they could conceive the relation of civilised to barbaric only in terms which served to explain Europe's problematic history. It was the intensity of their quarrel with their own civilisation that they imposed upon others in their book; precisely what Voltaire had accused the Jesuits of doing in China.

CHAPTER 14

The antiquity of Asia: priests, legislators and the tragedy of history

Having opened the route for compass-voyaging Europeans into the Indian Ocean and the China Seas, the Portuguese are followed by the corsairs and trading companies of other western nations: in order of arrival, the Dutch, English, French and a group of mainly Baltic powers, who complete a global loop by making contact with the overland Russians when these have begun to explore the Behring Straits. Each (the Baltic–Russian group collectively) is the subject of a section or *livre* of the *Histoire des deux Indes*, in which the authors set out the history of each nation, the origin and development of its commerce, the ways (usually malignant) in which the latter has affected its *esprit*; and together with this, what can be said of the natural and human environments, in and around the Asian ocean basins, with which each interacted in setting up the *établissements de son commerce*. Each 'book' of the *Histoire*'s first volume can therefore be thought of as organised around two histories, the one European and commercial, the other Asian and natural; or rather, this would be the case if the Asian cultures reviewed were uniformly mere features of the natural landscape, like the picturesque 'savages' who appear in the prints of the era, so that the 'history' written of them was a mere *histoire naturelle*. But in the eastern seas this is usually not the case; the natural man appears from time to time, but his and her true habitat is the Americas. The European inroad began at the height of Christendom's encounter with Ottoman Islam, the most formidable competitor it ever met face to face, and goes on to encounters with Safavid Iran, Mogul India, Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan; civilisations in every case ancient, literate and possessed of articulate structures of government, religion, law, philosophy and in some sense historiography. The history which European authors were compelled to write of them could not be confined to natural history – though this persists throughout the *Histoire* in the form of *encyclopédiste* accounts of the spices or textiles, the vegetable or mineral products, which became the staple of European commerce with each region. There must also be history 'as well

ecclesiastical as civil', out of which the Enlightened mind compounded as best it could a 'philosophical and political' history of the *mœurs* and *esprit*, the *commerce* and *police*, of nations it might dismiss as despotisms but not as savages.

The question must therefore arise: what capacity had eighteenth-century Europeans for writing the history of civilisations other than their own,[1] let alone seeing that history interacting with theirs in an age of encounter, commerce and globalisation? (Gibbon, though not a historian of that age, lived in it and was involved in this problem when he had to write the history of Persians, Moslems, Turks or Chinese.) Eurocentric it would have to be, in the sense that Europeans had to start with what ideas they had, and these would be largely ideas about themselves. But would they be capable of retelling the histories, if histories is what they were, which other cultures told of themselves, or of seeing those cultures as continuing to enact their histories in the encounter with Europeans? Here it is important to remember that the history which European philosophers told of their civilisation was at least as self-condemnatory as it was self-congratulatory. We have been tracing the growth of a Protestant-Enlightened scheme which dismissed the greater part of ancient history as 'decline and fall', the greater part of modern as 'barbarism and religion'. In constructing this scheme, use had been made of the history of alien civilisations – Persian, Moslem, Confucian – as the Christian or Enlightened mind understood them and could present them as antitheses of 'Europe'. The danger confronting the cultures outside Europe was not only that they might be unthinkingly dismissed as beneath the notice of European triumphalism; it was also that they might be pressed into service as fictitious opposites, in the rhetoric of European self-hatred. Such were, and are, the dangers of having to do with a disputatious culture. And the Europeans were writing the histories because they had made the voyages; it was they, not the Indians or Chinese, who had rounded the Cape and imposed their self-awareness upon others.

The first encounter recorded in the *Histoire* is not with circumnavigated Islam,[2] still less with the Africans encountered by the way, but with the India sought out by the Portuguese; and the history civil and ecclesiastical of Hindu culture is set out between the beginning and the end of the account we have studied of da Gama and Albuquerque as actors in world history. The reason is that India is already a presence in ancient history as the *Histoire*

[1] There is an interesting passage which suggests the possibility of reading an Indian temple as a text revealing its history; HDI, 1, p. 498 (Book 4, ch. XXII).

[2] Islamic history occurs in the context of the English trade with Persia (Book 3, ch. XI).

and its readers knew it. Historians of commerce in the Greco-Roman world – Huet, Anderson, at a later date Robertson[3] – were accustomed to dealing with that Ptolemaic and Roman trade out of Egypt with India which the *Histoire* had foregrounded, and to asking whether luxury and the loss of specie had contributed to Roman decline and might repeat the process among the moderns. Historians close in time to Alexander himself had noticed the appearance in his camp of Indian holy men – the *gymnosophistae* – and had speculated on their role in the prehistory of philosophy or natural religion. It was therefore necessary for the *Histoire* to consider the place of an ancient India in the modern world the half-barbarous European voyagers were about to set in motion.

Primarily, this immensely ancient culture was religious and priestly; in the institution of caste the Brahmins ranked ahead of the warriors and merchants; and the *Histoire* must balance the impulse to explain religion as the invention of designing men – exploiting the weakness of women – against the equally strong impulse to explain it as the product of impersonal causes, whether human nature itself or (as the *Histoire* prefers and endeavours to argue throughout its length) climate. On the one hand:

> La religion fut par-tout une invention d'hommes adroits et politiques, qui ne trouvant pas en eux-mêmes les moyens de gouverner leurs semblables à leur grè, cherchèrent dans le ciel la force qui leur manquoit, et en firent descendre la terreur. Ce ne fut que par le progrès de la civilisation et des lumières, qu'on s'enhardit à les examiner, et qu'on commença à rougir de sa croyance. D'entre les raisonneurs, les uns s'en moquèrent et formèrent la classe abhorrée des esprits forts; les autres par intérêt ou pusillanimité, cherchant à concilier la folie avec la raison, recoururent à des allegories dont les instituteurs du dogme n'avoient pas eu la moindre idée, et que le peuple ne comprit pas ou rejetta pour s'en tenir purement et simplement à la foi de ses pères.[4]

> [Religion was everywhere the invention of skilful and politic men who, finding not in themselves the means of governing their fellows at their will, sought in the sky the power which they lacked and invoked terror from above. It was only with the progress of reason and civilisation, that men were emboldened to examine such claims and began to blush at their own credulity. Some men of intellect derided all such things, and grew to be the detested class of free-thinkers; others, out of self-interest or timidity, sought to reconcile folly with reason, and had recourse to allegories of which the founders of dogma had had no idea, and which the people either did not understand or rejected, desiring to hold fast by the faith of their fathers.][5]

[3] Huet, 1763; Anderson, 1764; Robertson, *Works*, vol. IX (circa 1791).
[4] HDI, 1, p. 39. [5] Trans. JGAP. Not found in Justamond.

It is not clear whether this *progrès* had occurred in India; but the compromise between priestcraft and philosophy represented by the growth of allegory is to become a powerful voice in the world history of intellectual systems. On the other side of the historiography of religion, it is emphasised that the Himalaya divide the bracing aridity of the steppes and plateaux of Central Asia from the drenching humidity of the subcontinent.

Peut-être même est-ce dans l'Inde, où les deux empires du bien et du mal semblent n'être séparés que par un rampart de montagnes, qu'est né le dogme des deux principes, dogme dont l'homme ne s'affranchira peut-être jamais entièrement, tant qu'on ignorera les vues profondes de l'être tout-puissant qui créa l'Univers,[6]

[It is not improbable, that in India, where the two empires of good and evil are divided only by a partition of mountains, the doctrine of the two principles might take its rise; a doctrine which will never perhaps be entirely effaced from the mind of man, while he remains ignorant of the profound views of the Almighty Being who created the universe,][7]

but in whom the authors of the *Histoire* pretty certainly did not believe. The text proceeds to present the dualism of Ormuzd and Ahriman as what Gibbon called 'a bold and injudicious attempt of eastern philosophy'[8] to explain the origins of evil, but located it in the climate of India rather than Iran. The authors of this *histoire philosophique* are not deeply interested in the history of ancient philosophy; they give a philosophical, but not an erudite history of religion. There is argument in favour of the enormous antiquity of Indian culture compared with other civilisations, based in part on the complexity of both grammar and social institutions to be found in the recently deciphered Sanskrit language;[9] and a bridge between climate and invention is provided in the usual way, by supposing a primeval legislator, in this case deified as Bra[h]ma, who did what he could to regulate and justify human existence in the condition in which he found it, but resorted as they all do to codification and mystification in the effort to perpetuate his laws.

Brama voulut, sans doute, donner à ces différentes professions une consistance politique, en les consacrant par la religion, et en les perpétuant dans les familles qui les exerçoient alors; sans prévoir qu'il empêchoit par-là le progrès des decouvertes qui pourroient, dans la suite, donner lieu à de nouveaux métiers. Aussi, à en juger par l'exactitude religieuse que les Indiens ont même aujourd'hui à observer les loix de Brama, on peut assurer que depuis ce législateur, l'industrie n'a fait aucun progrès chez ces peuples, et qu'ils étoient à-peu-près aussi civilisés qu'ils le sont aujourd'hui, lorsqu'ils reçurent ces institutions. Cette observation suffira pour

[6] HDI, 1, p. 32. [7] Justamond, 1, p. 36. [8] Above, p. 32. [9] HDI, 1, p. 48.

donner une idée de l'antiquité de ce peuple, qui n'a rien ajouté à ses connoissances depuis une époque qui pâroit la plus ancienne du monde.[10]

[It was doubtless the intention of Brama, in confirming these different professions by sanctions in religion, and in confining the exercise of them perpetually to the same families, to give them a lasting establishment on political principles; but he did not foresee that, by these means, he should obstruct the progress of discoveries, which in future might give rise to new occupations. Accordingly, if we may judge from the scrupulous attention paid by the Indians at this day to the laws of Brama, we may affirm, that industry has made no advances among this people since the time of this legislator; and that they were almost as civilised as they are at present, when they first received his laws. This remark is sufficient to give us an idea of the antiquity of these people, who have made no improvements in knowledge since an era which seems to be the most ancient in history.][11]

In both Christian and libertine thought, the origin of false religion had been a problem: if not the work of the Evil One, was it the product of human fraud and error? Among the Gentiles, who might have the light of nature but lacked that of revelation, it was possible to imagine a relatively benign legislator, propounding a law which was more or less that of the naturally sociable man, claiming inspiration, prophetic gifts, or communications from a deity necessarily false, as the only way to impose his law on a superstitious populace. Enlightened thinkers disposed to believe that all religions were equally false adopted this image of the legislator as benign impostor, but found in it the tragedy of ancient and perhaps of human history. The legislator was driven to falsify his own work in at least two ways: first by establishing rituals, prohibitions and religious customs which had nothing of reason or nature in them, but for that reason alone obtained a grip on human nature which deformed it unalterably –

Législateurs, imbécilles, pourquoi n'avez-vous su démêler ce terrible ressort? Ou si vous l'avez connu, pourquoi n'en avez-vous su tirer parti, pour nous attacher à tous nos devoirs? Quels pères, quels enfants, quels amis n'eussiez-vous pas faits de nous, par la seulle dispensation de l'honneur et de la honte?[12]

[Short-sighted legislators, why have ye not discovered this powerful spring of action? Or, if ye have known it, why have ye not availed yourselves of it, to attach us to our duties? What good fathers, what obedient children, what true friends, what faithful citizens, would ye not have made of us, by the mere distribution of the motives of honour and shame?][13]

[10] Ibid. 1, p. 59. Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 65.
[11] Justamond, 1, pp. 67–8.
[12] HDI, 1, p. 61. Possibly Diderot, to whom Duchet ascribes the chapter on Hindu philosophy.
[13] Justamond, 1, p. 70.

– second, by setting up an invisible world of religious sanctions, instantly and enduringly exploited by the legions of inveterately malignant priests it called into being. This was the origin of all social evil, of all false consciousness and in an important sense of all history.

Il suffit qu'une nation puissante et peu éclairée adopte une première erreur, que l'ignorance accrédite: bientôt cette erreur, devenue générale, va servir de base à tout le système moral et politique: bientôt les penchants les plus honnêtes vont se trouver en contradiction avec les devoirs. Pour suivre le nouvel ordre moral, il faudra sans cesse faire violence à l'ordre physique. Ce combat perpétuel fera naître dans les mœurs les contradictions les plus étonnantes: et la nation ne sera plus qu'une assemblage de malheureux, qui passeront leur vie à se tormenter tour-à-tour, en se plaignant de la nature. Voilà le tableau de tous les peuples de la terre, si vous en exceptez peut-être quelques républiques de sauvages . . . Tels sont les funestes progrès de la première erreur que l'imposture a jettée ou nourrie dans l'esprit humain.[14]

[We need only suppose, that a powerful people, with few lights to direct them, adopt an original error, which ignorance brings into credit: this error soon becomes general, and is made the basis of an entire system of politics and morality; and men soon begin to find that their most innocent propensities are in opposition with their duties. In order to conform to this new plan of morality, perpetual violence must be offered to the plan of nature. This continual struggle will introduce a most amazing contrariety into their manners; and the nation will be composed of a set of wretches, who will pass their lives in mutually tormenting each other, and accusing nature. Such is the picture of all the peoples upon earth, excepting, perhaps, a few societies of savages . . . Such is the fatal progress of that original error which imposture has either produced or kept up in the mind of man.][15]

We are in a realm of universal or philosophical history, looking at man's first disobedience (to himself) and its fruits: at the original sin at the foundation of human society, which has set society and history at war with nature. The passage goes on to summon the 'sages de la terre, philosophes de toutes les nations' to enlighten mankind by revealing it to itself, thus ending the reign of error which the primeval sages began.[16] In what contemporary history they are to act is not made clear, though the establishment of a universal commerce may form part of it; but the history of ancient India has not finished revealing its fatal legacy to humanity.

L'esprit de dispute et d'abstraction, qui gâta pendant tant de siècles la philosophie de nos écoles, a bien fait plus de progrès dans celles de bramines, et mis beaucoup plus d'absurdité dans leur dogmes, qu'il n'en a introduit dans les nôtres, par le

[14] HDI, 1, p. 64. Obviously Diderot; the war between nature and institution.
[15] Justamond, 1, pp. 73–4. [16] HDI, 1, p. 64.

mélange du platonisme, qui fut peut-être lui-même une branche de la doctrine des brames.[17]

[That spirit of debate and refinement, which for so many ages has infected the philosophy of our schools, has made still further progress among the Bramins, and caused more absurdities in their doctrines than it has introduced into ours, by a mixture of Platonism, which is perhaps itself derived from the doctrines of the Bramins.][18]

Les autres vivent séparés du monde; et ce sont des imbécilles ou des enthousiastes, livrés à l'oisiveté, à la superstition, au délire de la métaphysique. On retrouve dans leurs disputes les mêmes idées que dans nos plus fameux métaphysiciens, la substance, l'accident, la priorité, la postériorité, l'immutabilité, l'indivisibilité, l'âme vitale et sensitive: avec cette difference, que ces belles découvertes sont très-anciennes dans l'Inde; et qu'il n'y a que fort peu de temps que Pierre Lombard, Saint Thomas, Leibnitz, Malebranche, étonnoient l'Europe par leur facilité à trouver toutes ces rêveries. Comme cette méthode de raisonner par l'abstraction nous est venue des philosophes Grecs, sur lesquels nous avons bien renchéri; on peut croire que les Grecs eux-mêmes devoient ces connoissances ridicules aux Indiens: à moins qu'on n'aime mieux soupçonner que les principes de la métaphysique étant à la portée de toutes les nations, l'oisiveté des bramines et de nos moines a produit les mêmes effets en Europe et aux Indes, sans qu'il y ait eu d'ailleurs aucune communication de doctrine entre les habitants de ces deux contrées . . .

A ces connoissances, qui flattent plus la curiosité de l'homme, qu'elles sont plus au-dessus de sa foiblesse, les brachmanes joignoient une infinité de pratiques religieuses, que Pythagore adopta dans son école: le jêune, la prière, la silence, la contemplation: vertus de l'imagination, qui frappent plus la multitude que les vertus utiles et bienfaisantes.[19]

[The others, who live abstracted from the world, are either weakminded men or enthusiasts, and abandon themselves to laziness, superstition, and the dreams of metaphysics. We find in their disputes the very same ideas that occur in the writings of our most celebrated metaphysicians; such as, substance, accident, priority, posteriority, immutability, indivisibility, the vital and sensitive soul; but with this difference, that in India these fine discoveries are very ancient, though it is but a short time since father Lombard, Thomas Aquinas, Leibnitz, and Malebranche, astonished all Europe with their dexterity in raising these visionary systems. As this abstracted manner of reasoning was derived to us from the Greek philosophers, whose refinements we have far exceeded, it is not improbable that the Greeks themselves might have borrowed this ridiculous knowledge from the Indians; unless we rather choose to suppose that as the principles of metaphysics lie open to the capacities of all nations, the indolence of the Brahmins may have produced the same effect in India, as that of our monks has done in Europe: notwithstanding the inhabitants of one country had never communicated their doctrines to those of the other . . .

[17] Ibid. 1, p. 49. Possibly Diderot.
[18] Justamond, 1, p. 56. [19] HDI, 1, pp. 50–1. Possibly Diderot.

To this species of knowledge, which is the more flattering to the curiosity of man in proportion as it transcends his weak capacity, the Brahmans added an infinite number of religious observances, which were adopted by Pythagoras in his school; such as fasting, prayer, silence, and contemplation; virtues of the imagination, which have a more powerful effect upon the vulgar than those of a useful and benevolent tendency.][20]

The *philosophes*' obsessive invective against monasticism is evident in these passages, but that against metaphysical dispute, the enemy of true philosophy and foundation of clerical authority, is more important still. It had long been noted that there might be some affinity between Vedic and Pythagorean philosophy and concepts of the divine, and such scholars as Isaac de Beausobre and Johann Jakob Brucker had elaborated an account of Eurasian philosophy in the Axial Age which showed concepts of immanent spirit and metempsychosis passing from Iran and India to the Ionian and Attic Greeks, where they had reappeared in the systems of Pythagoras and Plato, and given rise to Christian theology and medieval scholastic realism. These passages from the *Histoire des deux Indes* are not satirically presenting Hindu theosophy as a caricature of Christianity, still less as the origin of heresy; they are seriously concerned with Christianity's possible Eurasian origins. What is peculiar to them is the myth of metaphysics and the fate of legislation as part of a great divorce between nature and history; the ancient intellect as alienating itself from the universe, with profound political consequences, in a misguided attempt to understand it. Gibbon, who came to share much of this account of the history of philosophy and religion, never concurred that history was the fall from humanity's natural being.

Other Indian Ocean cultures come into view as the *Histoire*'s survey moves eastward with the commercial establishments of the Portuguese and after them the Dutch. There are accounts of Sri Lanka ('Ceylan'), where it is noted with approval that kings may be deposed for breach of the laws,[21] and, as we reach the straits leading through the Malay archipelago to the China Seas, of Malacca.[22] Here a port which is already the entrepot of the East Indies has been established in the midst of peoples of exceptional warrior ferocity, and there is an interesting passage on the role of empire and commerce in civilisation.

Un peuple à qui la nature a donné cette inflexibilité de courage, peut bien être exterminé, mais non soumis par la force. Il n'y a que l'humanité, l'attrait des

[20] Justamond, 1, pp. 57–8. 'Father Lombard' suggests a misreading of 'Pierre' as 'père'.
[21] HDI, 1, pp. 85–6 (Book 1, ch. xv). [22] Ch. xvi.

richesses ou de la liberté, l'exemple des vertus et de la modération, une administration douce, qui puissant les civiliser. Il faut le rendre ou le laisser à lui-même, avant de former avec lui les liaisons qu'il repousse. La voie de la conquête seroit, peut-être, la dernière qu'il faut tenter: elle ne seroit qu'exalter en lui l'horreur d'une domination étrangère, et qu'effaroucher tous les sentiments de la sociabilité. La nature a placé certains peuples au milieu de la mer, comme les lions dans les déserts, pour être libres. Les tempêtes, les sables, les forêts, les montagnes, et les cavernes, sont l'asyle et les remparts de tous les êtres independents. Malheur aux nations policées, qui voudront s'élever contre les forces et les droits des peuples insulaires et sauvages! Elles deviendront cruelles et barbares sans fruit; elles semeront la haine dans la dévastation, et ne recueilleront que l'opprobre et la vengeance.[23]

[People who derive from nature such inflexible bravery, may be exterminated, but cannot be subdued by force. They are only to be civilised by humane treatment, by the allurements of riches or liberty, by the influence of virtue and moderation, and by a mild government. They must be restored to their rights, or left to themselves, before we can hope to establish any intercourse with them. To attempt to reduce them by conquest is, perhaps, the last method that should be tried, as it will only increase their abhorrence of a foreign yoke, and discourage them from entering into any social engagements. Nature has placed certain people in the midst of the ocean, like lions in the deserts, that they may enjoy their liberty. Tempests, sands, forests, mountains, and caverns, are places of refuge and defence to all independent beings. Civilised nations should take care how they invade the rights, or rouse the spirits of islanders and savages: as they may be assured that they will become cruel and barbarous to no purpose; that their ravages will make them detested; and that disgrace and revenge are the only laurels they can expect to obtain.][24]

At one level, this may be a warning to the French in their dealings with the warlike Corsicans, where colonial conquest was afoot in the Mediterranean home waters themselves; but there are other levels where we find problems which will persist throughout the *Histoire* as a whole. The ferocious independence of the Malays and other insular peoples is *sauvage*; it is by no means the same as the civil liberty which only moderate government and *le doux commerce* can bring; but how are government and commerce to be introduced among peoples both insular and savage? If conquest is fatal to both parties, how is one to form with them *des liaisons qu'ils répoussent*? The problem of cultural contact becomes that of introducing commerce where it has not previously existed, by means which are archaic and destructive when judged by its standards. And the existence of islands is in itself a problem bordering on the existential. The condition of isolation *au milieu de la mer*, which makes peoples savagely independent – we do not hear Giannone's conviction that *in mezzo all'oceano* they may evolve

[23] HDI, 1, p. 91. [24] Justamond, 1, pp. 104–5.

their own customary law[25] – is precisely what makes them accessible and attractive to voyaging peoples in search of commerce or of conquest; every merchant may still be a pirate, and with the invention of the compass, the medium which isolated has become the medium of access. The *Histoire* began with a song in praise of commerce, the sole civilising agency in human history; but it has become a history of trans-oceanic movement, in which we see that commerce is inseparable from navigation, and navigation from encounter between peoples among whom the unreadiness of some for commerce is fatal to the civility of those who encounter them. The savages do not corrupt us, but they offer us the opportunity to corrupt ourselves. The whole enterprise of commerce begins to look self-defeating when viewed in an oceanic and global setting; and we shall encounter passages in the *Histoire des deux Indes* which seem to ask whether navigation – alternatively, whether the human inhabitation of islands – may not have something in it contrary to human nature.

The problem of insularity next arises when the *Histoire* comes to consider Japan, which it does only after the pursuit of Portuguese commerce has brought it to Macao and the entry point to the great civilisation of China. The latter was already viewed by the Enlightened as the continental alternative to Europe, perhaps the utopia in which metaphysics and revelation had never arisen to disturb the natural sociability of mankind; the agrarian and commercial *état policé* which, we learn from the *Histoire*, had already established a commerce in spices with the warlike islanders of Malay Nanyang, and opened it to the global trade-system of the Arabs and now the interloping Europeans. But the Chinese capacity for seagoing commerce was always marginal to their characterisation as a civilisation wholly self-contained and stable. This rested on the Enlightened myth of Confucianism as a religion in which the secular and the sacred were one, a worship of nothing beyond the sociability natural to humanity and the nature – perhaps also the God – implicit in that sociability. If there was nothing worth telling about human history except the sociability natural to it, and if the history of the Chinese consisted in nothing but the preservation of that sociability, it was clear what paradoxes followed.

> L'histoire d'une nation si bien policée, disent ses partisans, est proprement l'histoire des hommes; tout le reste de la terre est une image du cahos où étoit la matière avant la formation du monde. C'est par une continuité de destructions que la société s'est essayée à l'ordre, à l'harmonie. Les états et les peuples y sont

[25] NCG, pp. 33–5.

nés les uns des autres comme les individus; avec cette différence, que dans les familles la nature pourvoit à la mort des uns, à la naissance des autres, par des voies constantes et regulières. Mais dans les états, la société trouble et rompt cette loi par un désordre où l'on voit, tantôt les anciennes monarchies étouffer au berceau les républiques naissantes, et tantôt un peuple informe et sauvage, engloutir dans ses irruptions une foule d'états brisés et demembrés.[26]

[The history of a nation so well governed, say the partisans of China, is the history of mankind: the rest of the world resembles the chaos of matter before it was wrought into form. After a long series of devastations, society has at length risen to order and harmony. States and nations are produced from each other, like individuals, with this difference, that in families, Nature brings about the death of some, and provides for the birth of others, in a constant and regular succession: but, in states, this rule is violated and destroyed, by the disorders of society; where it sometimes happens, that ancient monarchies stifle rising republics in their births; and that a rude and savage people, rushing like a torrent, sweep away multitudes of states, which are disunited and broken into pieces.][27]

Yet this was the theme of all narrative history, and perhaps the only history that could be narrated, for the paradoxical reason that it was not worth narrating; the dualist warfare between chaos and order, which Voltaire had written because Emilie du Chatelet found it not worth reading and could dignify only by turning it into a search for the historical foundations of the *beau siècle* in which *la lumière commençait partout*.[28] The *Histoire* is reiterating a point once made by Machiavelli: if a legislator has done his work so perfectly that nothing needs changing thereafter, there is no history to be written and nothing to study beyond the perfection of his work. However, the legislators of Eurasia typically failed in this, through their appeals to a reality beyond sociability which replaced the war between chaos and order by a war between false and true orders. If Confucius had been something more than a legislator, or a legislator who had evaded the dreadful error of separating the sacred from the secular, Chinese civilisation might have been aided by its insulation, continental as well as maritime, to preserve from the beginnings a sociability so deeply entrenched as to be worth studying but not narrating:

les Chinois, enfermés et garantis de tous côtés par les eaux et les déserts, ont pu, comme l'ancienne Egypte, former un état durable. Dès que leurs côtes et le milieu de leur continent ont été peuplés et cultivés; tout ce qui environnoit ces heureux habitants a dû se réunir à eux comme à un centre d'attraction; et les

[26] HDI, 1, pp. 99–100. [27] Justamond, 1, p. 114. [28] NCG, pp. 90–1, 105–6, 137, 152.

petits peuplades errantes ou cantonnés, ont dû s'attacher de proche en proche à une nation qui ne parle presque jamais des conquêtes qu'elle a faites, mais des guerres qu'elle a souffertes: plus heureuse d'avoir policé ses vainqueurs, que si elle eût détruit ses ennemis.[29]

[But the Chinese, who are encompassed and defended on all sides by seas and deserts, like the ancient Egyptians, may have given a lasting stability to their empire. As soon as their coasts and the inland parts of their territories have been peopled and cultivated, this happy nation must of course have been the centre of attraction to all the surrounding people: and the wandering or cantoned tribes must necessarily have gradually attached themselves to a body of men, who speak less frequently of the conquests they have made, than of the attacks they have suffered; and are happier in the thought of having civilised their conquerors, than they could have been in that of having destroyed their invaders.][30]

But had China always been this self-subsisting galaxy of sociability, this Middle Kingdom imperturbably certain of assimilating Mongols, Manchus and southern barbarians to a system of manners so deeply rooted in nature that nomads might conquer but could not change them; was barbarism impotent in Chinese history because religion had no existence independent of society? The authors of the *Histoire*, who never cite their sources, do not mention, but should certainly have known, the work of de Guignes; nor do they seem to ask what will become of the Middle Kingdom now that the ocean has been opened to European conquest and commerce. Instead of these enquiries, the chapter on China as an Enlightened utopia, free from feudal nobility and churches claiming independent spiritual authority, engrossed only in the worship of natural sociability ('une sorte de culte qu'on rend sans cesse à la vertu'), is succeeded by a chapter on China as dystopia.[31] The reader is invited to use his own judgement, or to await the findings of an expedition of investigating *philosophes*.

It seems worth breaking this chapter's rule against authorial attribution to point out that this antithesis appears to have been insisted on by Diderot; we may have to do here with his conviction that no such thing as a wholly natural society could exist in history. The sceptical or negative account given of Chinese government and religion does not seem to rest on their refusal to engage in commerce with the Europeans, as it had been Voltaire's hope that they were beginning to do. It emphasises in passing that there are monks and temples, presumably Buddhist and Taoist, by definition as bad as monks anywhere else; but the weight of the indictment rests,

[29] HDI, 1, p. 100. [30] Justamond, 1, p. 115.
[31] Book 1, ch. XXI. Attributed to Diderot by Duchet, 1978, p. 66.

rather unexpectedly, on the charge that China is becoming grossly over-populated. This is surprising because Enlightened social criticism had been based on an apparently unlimited commitment to population increase; this had lain at the roots of an unending invective against a celibate clergy and communities of monks and nuns, who failed in their duty to society and whose de-sexualised inaction, or *oisiveté*, gave rise to both superstition and theological dispute. In the previous chapter, written in praise of China, this had been argued that *lettres* and *beaux-arts* were under-developed in Confucian society because human energies were devoted to maintaining the social and moral fabric;

si cette nation est infiniment nombreuse; s'il y faut une vigilance continuelle des savants sur la population et la subsistence; si chacun, outre les devoirs publics dont la connoissance même est une longue science, a des devoirs particuliers, soit de famille ou de la profession,[32]

[where the same nation is exceedingly populous, and requires a constant attention in its learned members to make subsistence keep an equal pace with population; where every individual, beside the duties he owes to the public, which take a considerable time to be well understood, has particular duties arising from the claims of his family or profession,][33]

there could be neither the leisure in which the arts could be produced nor the consumer market in which they could be distributed. But in the next chapter the argument is reversed, and what may be the despotism of manners reappears:

un dernier phénomène qui achève de confirmer l'excessive population de la Chine, c'est le peu de progrès des sciences et des arts, depuis l'époque très-eloignée qu'on les y cultive. Les recherches s'y sont arrêtées au point ou, cessant d'être utiles, elles commencent à devenir curieuses. Il y a plus de profit à faire à l'invention du plus petit art pratique, qu'à la plus sublime découverte qui ne montreroit que du gènie . . . Je demande si ce repos, contraire au penchant naturel de l'homme, qui veut toujours voir au-delà de ce qu'il a vu, peut s'expliquer autrement que par une population qui interdise l'oisiveté, l'esprit de meditation, et qui tienne la nation soucieuse, continuellement occupée à ses besoins. La Chine est donc la contrée de la terre la plus peuplée.[34]

[But there is still another phenomenon which more particularly confirms the opinion of the excessive population of China, and this is, the little progress the arts and sciences have made there, in proportion to the extreme length of time they have been cultivated. The spirit of inquiry has stopped just at that point where, ceasing to be useful, its researches begin to be mere objects of curiosity. There is

[32] HDI, 1, p. 114.
[33] Justamond, 1, pp. 130–1.
[34] HDI, 1, p. 118.

more advantage to be derived from the invention of the most trifling practical art, than from the most sublime discovery which should be only the work of genius . . . I ask whether this spirit of tranquillity so contrary to the natural disposition of man, who is always inclined to go beyond what he already knows, can be otherwise explained, than by a degree of population which prohibits idleness and the spirit of contemplation, and which keeps the nation in a continual state of anxiety and attention to its wants. China is, therefore, the most populous region on the face of the globe.][35]

Both arguments take it as agreed that Chinese art is imperfect and underdeveloped; though this is the peak of the high Ch'ing period, it is also the age of *chinoiserie* and the confusions of inter-cultural commerce. What is more noteworthy, the critique of Chinese culture does not seem to notice that the curiosity which makes humans desire to go ever a little farther and to hear some new thing, above all when coupled with *oisiveté*, celibacy and *l'esprit de méditation*, is precisely what has produced the systems of speculative metaphysics that have undone the work of the legislators, and which Enlightenment has come to undo by rendering society once more practical, utilitarian and *occupée à ses besoins*. It is difficult to be sure where this sudden concern with over-population comes from: the perception of a population explosion in China? The European grain famines of the 1760s? Some strictly French polemic against the physiocrats? Whatever the answer, it lies at the root of the criticism of Confucian culture which is matched against its panegyric.

Apologistes insensés de la Chine, vous écoutez-vous? Concevez-vous bien ce que c'est deux cents millions d'individus entassés les uns sur les autres? Croyez-moi, ou diminuez de la moitié, des trois quarts cette épouvantable population; ou, si vous persistez à y croire, convenez d'après le bon sens qui est en vous, d'après l'expérience qui est sous vos yeux, qu'il n'y a, qu'il ne peut y avoir, ni police, ni mœurs à la Chine.[36]

[Extravagant panegyrists of China, do ye understand yourselves? Have you an exact conception of such a number as two hundred millions of individuals heaped one upon the other? Believe me, you must either subtract one-half or three-fourths of this enormous population; or, if you persist in giving credit to it, acknowledge, from the good sense you possess, and from the result of the experience that is submitted to your inspection, that there is not, and that there cannot be, either policy or manners in China.][37]

Exalted above the atmosphere, the orbiting philosopher's vision moves on to Japan. Here is an island society, shaken by earthquakes and feudal

[35] Justamond, 1, p. 132.
[36] HDI, 1, p. 127. [37] Justamond, 1, pp. 146–7.

wars, given to violent manners and competing superstitions. 'Celle du Sintos . . . la religion du pays, l'ancienne religion', receives the most friendly treatment; it recognises a supreme being and the immortality of the soul, and the *kami* whom it worships in such profusion are probably the deified *manes* of bygone benefactors. Shinto is a natural religion, hardly flawed by an equally natural superstition, and it curbs the gloom and fear of most religions by means of festivals conducted every few months, with cheerful pleasures and ritualised temple sex. The *Histoire* goes on to consider at some length the role of women in the history of religion, where the weaknesses of their constitution and the mysteries of its phenomena have left them liable to priests and impostors exploiting 'toutes les sortes de convulsions [qu']appartiennent à la sensibilité du genre nerveux'. As puberty and virginity encourage 'les extases, les apparitions, les frayeurs et les ravissements . . . les spasmes et les vapeurs', organised religion is interested in prolonging this condition, and this is the origin of female celibacy in most cults. In climates like Japan, however, where the sexual impulse cannot be repressed – Gibbon was to make a joke about the *subintroductae*, 'the virgins of the warm climate of Africa', who submitted chastity to the severest of tests[38] – wise legislators incorporate it into their cults, at least in the worship of philoprogenitiveness:

> les moyens les plus surs de multiplier les individus et de les rendre heureux[.] Qu'il faut plaindre les ames froides, insensibles, malheureuses et dures, à qui ces sentiments, ces vœux d'un coeur honnête, paroîtroient un délire ou même un attentat!
>
> Tels sont les Budsöistes, autre secte de Japon, dont Buds fut le fondateur.[39]
>
> [. . . the surest means of multiplying individuals and making them happy. How we must pity those cold, insensitive, hard and unhappy souls, to whom such sentiments, such vows of a feeling heart, seem a folly or even a crime!
>
> Such are the Budsoists, another Japanese sect, of which Buds was the founder.][40]

Whatever the *Histoire*'s sources of information, it contains no coherent account of Buddhism as a religion spread throughout Asia, and this sect appears peculiar to Japan. In its grim repression of the pleasures of the body, its frightening visions of hell and hereafter, and its predictable concentrations of monks in temples, it has imposed on the jovial country paganism of Shinto the gloomy violence of a warrior ethos.

Les lumières d'une saine morale, un peu de philosophie, une éducation sage, auroient pu servir de remède à ces loix, à ce gouvernement, à cette religion, qui

[38] DF, 1, ch. 15; Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 480–1.
[39] HDI, 1, p. 133. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 67.
[40] Trans. JGAP.

concouroient à rendre l'homme plus féroce dans la société des hommes, qu'il ne l'eût été dans les bois parmi les monstres des déserts.

[The lights of a sound morality, a little philosophy, and a prudent system of education might have remedied these laws, this government, and this religion; which conspire to make mankind more savage in society with his own species, than if he lived in the woods, and had no companions but the monsters that roam about the deserts.]

There is little doubt where this enlightenment could have been found.

A la Chine, on met entre les mains des enfants, des livres didactiques, qui les instruisent en detail de leurs devoirs, et qui leur démontrent les avantages de la vertu; aux enfants Japonois, on fait apprendre par coeur des poëmes, où sont célébrées les vertus de leurs ancêtres, ou l'on inspire le mépris de la vie et le courage du suicide. Ces chants, ces poëmes, qu'on dit pleins d'énergie et de grace, enfantent l'enthousiasme. L'éducation des Chinois regle l'ame, la dispose à l'ordre; celle des Japonois l'enflamme et la porte à l'héroïsme. On les conduit toute leur vie par le sentiment, et le Chinois par la raison et les usages. Tandis que le Chinois, ne cherchant que la vérité dans les livres, se contente du bonheur qui naît de la tranquillité; le Japonois, avide de jouissances, aime mieux souffrir que de ne rien sentir. Il semble qu'en général les Chinois tendent à prévenir la violence et l'impétuosité de l'ame; les Japonois, son engourdissement et sa foiblesse.[41]

[In China, they put into the hands of children books of instruction, which contain a detail of their duties, and teach them the advantages of virtue. The Japanese children are made to get by heart poems in which the actions of their forefathers are celebrated; a contempt of life is inculcated, and suicide is set up as the most heroic of all actions. These songs and poems, which are said to be full of energy and beauty, beget enthusiasm. The Chinese education tends to regulate the soul, and keep it in order; the Japanese, to inflame and excite it to heroism. These are guided through life by sentiment; the Chinese by reason and custom.

The Chinese aim only at truth in their writings, and place their happiness in a state of tranquillity. The Japanese are eager in the pursuit of pleasure, and would rather suffer, than be without feeling. In a word, the Chinese seem to wish to counteract the violence and impetuosity of the soul; the Japanese to keep it from sinking into a state of languor and inactivity.][42]

Buddhist repression begets warrior violence and enthusiasm; Gibbon remarked that the summons to war aroused the barbarian to 'a more lively sense of his existence'.[43] Little though the authors of the *Histoire* knew about Buddhism or the history of Japan, the image they were putting together was further elaborated when they came, in the second *livre*, to deal with the

[41] HDI, 1, p. 134.

[42] Justamond, 1, pp. 152–3. It is worth comparing Voltaire's account of Japan (*Essai sur les Moeurs*, ch. CXLII), where Confucianism is said to have made real progress.

[43] Above, p. 81.

impact of Christianity on that warrior culture. The decline of Portuguese seaborne empire and the rise of the Dutch coincided with a period in Japanese history when the ferocity of feudal warfare was being ended by the equally ferocious tyranny of 'Taycosama', evidently the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate. The warriors were in search of a new ideology.

Avides de la mort, ils la cherchoient souvent par des crimes qui, sous le despotisme, ne pouvoient leur manquer. Au défaut des bourreaux, ils se punissoient de leur esclavage, ou se vengeoient de la tyrannie, en se donnant la mort. Un nouveau courage, un nouveau motif de la braver, vint les aider à souffrir. Ce fut le christianisme que les Portugais leur avoient apporté.

Ce nouveau culte trouva dans l'oppression des Japonais, le germe le plus fécond de prosélytisme. On écoute les missionnaires qui prêchoient une religion de souffrances. En vain la doctrine de Confucius cherchoit à s'insinuer chez un peuple voisin de la Chine. Elle étoit trop simple, trop raisonnable, cette doctrine, pour des insulaires, dont l'imagination, naturellement inquiète, étoit encore exaltée par les cruautés du gouvernement. Quelques dogmes du christianisme, assez semblables à ceux des Budsöistes; le même esprit de pénitence dans les deux croyances, donnèrent des prosélytes aux missionaires Portugais. Mais, indépendamment de cette conformité, on se seroit fait chrétien au Japon, seulement par haine du prince ... On aime un Dieu étranger que n'aimoit pas le tyran.[44]

[They sought, with a strange avidity, to procure death, by committing crimes which were readily suggested, under a despotic government. For want of executioners, they punished themselves for the loss of liberty, or revenged themselves on tyranny, by putting an end to their own existence. To enable them to face death, and to assist them in suffering it, they derived new courage from that system of Christianity which the Portuguese had introduced among them.

The oppressions the Japanese laboured under, afforded an opportunity for the professors of this new worship to make numerous proselytes. The missionaries who preached a suffering religion, were listened to with attention. In vain did the doctrine of Confucius try to gain reception among a people who bordered upon China. The doctrine was too simple and too rational for islanders, whose imagination, naturally restless, was still more heated by the cruelties of the government. Some erroneous tenets of Christianity, which bore a considerable affinity to those of the Budzoists, and the penances equally enjoined by the two systems, procured the Portuguese missionaries several proselytes. But, setting aside this resemblance, the Japanese would have chosen to embrace Christianity, merely from a motive of hatred to the prince ... They were fond of a strange God, whom the tyrant did not love.][45]

And the ensuing persecutions shed blood which was the seed of the Church till there was no blood left to shed. It is as if Gothic warriors had

[44] HDI, 1, p. 167 (Book 2, ch. VII).

[45] Justamond, 1, pp. 189–90; the last words mistranslated. *Contra*: 'they loved a foreign god who did not love the tyrant'.

hurled themselves on the Romans demanding martyrdom, as indeed the *circumcelliones* did in the rebellions of Donatist Africa. The authors of the *Histoire* have some capacity for writing a Japanese history, because they understand a relation between a self-denying religion and a warrior ethos which asserts the self in denying it. If they had known that the Tokugawa *bakufu* supported itself by institutionalising an imported Chinese Neo-Confucianism, and that there ensued a species of Enlightenment in which all texts, including the Confucian, were seen as the products of their authors' minds,[46] they would have taken a more benign view of its government, but would not have much altered their interpretation of the 'Christian century'. What they lacked was any understanding that the religion of 'Buds' and the 'Budsöistes' was anything other than a local warrior sect, or that it was an aspect of 'Buddhism', a religion distributed throughout Asia and originating so far west that Joseph de Guignes could take it for a Christian heresy like Manicheism, taking shape where the evangel of the Saviour was contaminated by contact with the Eurasian family of religions which taught non-being and rebirth. They had heard that the Sinhalese venerated

dans les dieux du seconde ordre un Buddou, qui est descendu sur terre pour se rendre médiateur entre Dieu et les hommes. Les prêtres de Buddou sont des personnages fort importants à Ceylan,[47]

[Among the deities of the second order, particular honours are paid to Buddou, who descended upon earth to take upon himself the office of mediator between God and mankind. The priests of Buddou are persons of great consequence in Ceylon,]

they added without evident surprise.[48] Much later in the *Histoire* comes a description of 'Tartarie', as the whole region lying between Russia and China and now becoming subject to them both, and we are told that most of its peoples have adopted the religion of the Grand Lama who resides at Potala but is seldom seen in public.

Rien n'est plus respectable qu'un culte qui eut toujours pour base l'existence du premier être et la morale la plus pure.

It is untrue – as we have learned from 'un philosophe lumineux et profond'[49] – that the Lama claims to be immortal, or that this fraud is kept up by substituting his double at his death. Rather,

la foi du pays ordonne de croire, que l'esprit saint qui a animé un de ces pontifes, passé d'abord après sa mort dans le corps de celui qui est légitimement élu

[46] Maruyama, 1974; Najita, 1987.
[47] HDI, 1, p. 87 (Book 1, ch. xv). [48] Justamond, 1, p. 100.
[49] As usual, there is no reference which indicates this author's identity.

pour le remplacer. Cette transmigration du souffle divin, s'allie très-bien avec la metempsychose, dont le systême est établi de temps immemorial dans ces contrées.

[Their religion is founded on the existence of a Supreme Being, and the sublimest principles of morality . . . It is a tenet of their faith, that the holy spirit, which has animated one of these pontiffs, immediately upon his death passes into the body of him who is duly elected to succeed him. This transmigration of the divine spirit is perfectly consonant to the doctrine of the metempsychosis, which has always been the established system in those parts.][50]

There is no mention of Buddou or Buds.[51] The religion of Tibet is being let off lightly, as a specimen of the monotheism natural to mankind, at the not uncommon point of development where an immanent world-spirit and doctrines of rebirth make their appearance. If the Lamas are priests, they are also priest-kings; theocracy is not nearly as offensive as a spiritual authority in competition with the civil. Their religion has remained unaltered for perhaps three thousand years, and

fit de bonne heure des progrès considérables. On l'adopta dans un portion du globe fort étendue. Elle domine dans tout le Thibet, dans toute la Mongalie. Les deux Bucharies, et plusieurs provinces de la Tartarie, lui sont presque totalement soumises. Elle a des sectateurs dans le royaume de Cachemire, aux Indes et à la Chine,

and the progress of *l'esprit humain* will enlighten the Tartars in due course.[52] It is clear that the writers of the *Histoire des deux Indes* had no idea that this religion was in any way associated with the 'Budsöistes' of Japan, the 'bonzes' in China or the 'talapoins' in Thailand, or any other of the monastic outgrowths of whom they read with displeasure in various parts of Asia; or that it was relevant when they wrote:

La réligion des Chinois a été plus d'une fois altérée par l'arrivée des divinités étrangères et des superstitions qu'on a fait goûter aux dernières classes du peuple.[53]

[. . .made considerable progress in early times. It was adopted in a large part of the globe. It is professed all over Thibet and Mongalia; it is almost universal in Greater and Less Bucharia, and several provinces of Tartary; and has some followers in the kingdom of Cassimere in India, and in China.

The religion of the Chinese has been frequently adulterated by the introduction of foreign deities and superstitions, which have been adopted to the taste of the lower class of people.][54]

[50] Justamond, II, pp. 246–7.
[51] HDI, I, pp. 616–17 (Book 5, ch. XVII). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 72.
[52] HDI, I, p. 617–18. [53] Ibid. I, p. 617.
[54] Justamond, II, pp. 247–8. (*Sic*, for 'Mongalia' instead of 'Mongolia'.)

Confucians and Jesuits between them had suppressed nearly all serious consideration of Chinese Buddhism; and it was a consequence that the *philosophes* lacked the means of constructing a history of China along lines similar to those they possessed of Europe, one in which Confucianism would have played the role of Roman Stoicism or Athenian philosophy, and Buddhism that of Christianity. It would have been an implicitly Eurocentric history, in contrast to that we now possess of an ongoing dialogue between the Confucian and Legalist poles of Han moral philosophy; but it would have been a history, in contrast to the *philosophe* myth of unchanging Confucian order, so deeply identical with the sociable morality of nature that it denied the existence of history and took its place. The *Histoire des deux Indes* was not without resources for ascribing history to the ancient civilisations with which it described the European encounter, but we have arrived at one of the limits beyond which those resources did not go.

As we approach the end of the Indian Ocean volume of the *Histoire des deux Indes*, it appears that history arising from European commerce with 'the Indies' is primarily a European history; the emphasis falls on the harm the Europeans are doing to themselves. It is the tragedy of world history that the Europeans who broke into the world's oceans were still half barbarous and had scarcely begun to be enlightened by *le doux commerce* (this term, though established in Enlightened discourse, is not in use in the *Histoire*). The term 'barbarous', it is important to remember, is historically specific. When the authorial *moi* has recourse to the second person plural in denouncing 'Barbares Européens!' he does not mean merely that they were behaving barbarously by the standards of natural morality; nor is he resorting to cultural relativism and saying that they are barbarians by the standards of the cultures they attack and plunder. He is saying that European civility has not yet emerged from the thousand-year darkness of barbarism and religion; from a European barbarism, that is, from which there can only be a European exit. Because that exit has not yet been found, the Europeans in the Indian Ocean – soon, and infinitely more destructively, in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica – are both piratical and fanatical; and they do not yet understand the principles of commerce. They set up extractive economies, monopolistic in respect of both Indo-Malayan and interloping European merchants; and the monopolising chartered companies they establish, unable to sustain an open and fruitful commerce, set up cycles of war and public debt which inevitably corrupt the political and economic structures of the home states. Each section of the history of the European nations which enter the Indian Ocean – after the Portuguese (whose fate is of a peculiar character not yet disclosed) the Dutch, the

English, the French – ends with an invective of the sort called 'patriot' in the language of the 1770s and 1780s: one directed at the political corruption which ensues from public debt and prophesying the despotism which must ensue from corruption. Patriot invective might foretell either the growth of a neo-barbarism in a form historically new, or (as we know from the letters of David Hume) the reversion to barbarism of the characteristically European kind ensured by the persistence of religious fanaticism. In the Dutch case the rhetoric of the *Histoire des deux Indes* resembles that of the *Patriottentijd*;[55] in the English, that of the opposition in the middle years of George III, much in Gibbon's ears at the time of the American war;[56] in the French, there is a long admonition to the young Louis XVI, adjuring him to free his kingdom from debt by a general reformation.[57] We know we are reading the language of the decade before the Revolution.

In each national case, the history of public finance is traced from its medieval beginnings in the first stage of the European recovery from barbarism. Since that recovery is incomplete, we are in the midst of a history essentially European, and the Indian Ocean cultures, while presented as its victims, do not act in it by creating their own active commerce. There is some emphasis on the roles of any Asian ethnic or social group showing advanced commercial capacity: Arabs in Arabia Felix, Armenians in Persia and Central Asia, Parsis, Banians and Sikhs (practitioners of another pure and natural monotheism) in India and, of course Chinese in Indonesia; but none of these have developed a fully investive capitalism, nor – with the complex and limited exception of the Chinese – are they backed by a state capable of guaranteeing a free and competitive commerce. It is to that condition which the Europeans aspire, but they have not reached it yet, and the Russians – whom the reforms of Peter and Catherine place in a history of their own – will never reach it till they cease to be encumbered by serfdom. But theirs is a land power, and the contact of the Europeans with Asia is maintained by sea. While all maritime contacts are initially violent, they can be converted into associations for mutual commerce; but there remains the insistent question whether Europeans and Asians – in this respect particularly Indians – have a true economic need of one another. If not, the European demand is in the end for self-corrupting luxuries, and the Asian role in satisfying it must remain passive.

> Tant que je ne verrai pas des vaisseaux Indiens venir chercher dans nos ports nos étoffes et nos métaux, je dirai que ce peuple n'a pas besoin de nous, et qu'il nous fera nécessairement la loi dans tous les marchés que nous ferons avec lui.[58]

[55] HDI, 1, pp. 256–60 (Book 2, ch. xxv).
[56] Ibid. 1, pp. 380–98 (Book 3, chs. xxxviii–xli)
[57] Ibid. 1, pp. 469–75 (Book 4, ch. xvii).
[58] Ibid. 1, p. 704.

[As long as no Indian ships come into our harbours to carry away our stuffs and our metals, we may venture to affirm, that those people are in no want of us, and will consequently make their own terms in all their dealings with us.][59]

Europeans may have to use force to establish these markets, and they may, disastrously, be compelled to rely on monopolist companies to conduct so one-sided a commerce. There has recurred the problem of oriental despotism. Any *état policé* necessarily corrupts its subjects if these do not retain and develop the free activity, commercial and civil, of the independent proprietor, and

L'Indien n'est pas le maître de sa vie . . . Il n'est pas le maître de son esprit . . . Il n'est pas le maître du champ qu'il cultive . . . Il n'est pas le maître de son industrie . . . Il n'est pas le maître de ses richesses . . .[60]

[The Indian is not master of his own life . . . his own understanding . . . his own field . . . his own industry . . . his own wealth . . .][61]

and a continental culture so inert cannot even be conquered, since even conquest cannot change it. The *Histoire* seems to have abandoned the hope that even the French or English researches into Hindu law will reveal a culture capable of autonomy, and now proclaims that the programme of substituting free commerce for company monopoly is a dream of a few 'respectables enthousiastes de la liberté'.[62] The authors have either been bought off, or are retreating into historical pessimism, and it is interesting to note that the radical friends of liberty, Raynal and Diderot, ended by restoring the myth of oriental despotism; whereas its principal English-speaking opponents were that unlikeliest of human pairs, Warren Hastings and Edmund Burke. The *Histoire des deux Indes* has an agenda, or a utopia, of its own. Only a revolutionary change in the manners of Europeans can free them from a commerce essentially corrupting.

Il faudroit rentrer dans les bornes d'une nature simple, dont nous paroissons sortis pour toujours.

Telles sont les dernières réfléxions que nous dicteront les relations de l'Europe avec l'Asia. Il est temps de s'occuper de l'Amerique.

Fin du cinquième Livre et du Tome premier.[63]

[Such a revolution should take place in the manners, customs, and opinions of men, as is never likely to happen. Our actions should be regulated according to the principles of nature, which we seem to have abandoned for ever.

Such are the last reflections suggested to us with respect to the connections of Europe and Asia: let us now turn our thoughts to America.][64]

[59] Justamond, II, p. 342.
[60] HDI, I, pp. 687–8. Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 72. [61] Justamond, II, p. 324.
[62] HDI, I, p. 704. [63] Ibid. I, p. 711. [64] Justamond, II, p. 349.

If no means can be found of admitting Asians to the individualising history of Europe, the choice lies between the dystopian prospect of imposing that history on peoples who decline or lack the capacity to accept it, and the utopian prospect that Europeans will cease to pursue the history they have generated and revert to the life of nature. The quite expressly stated assumption is that Asians will not generate a history of their own, in any way resembling the restless and self-transforming activity for which Europeans are both condemned and admired. The Chinese have chosen a mode of existence which is either an alternative history or an alternative to it, and what may be going on among the restless and insular Japanese is not again considered. Turning away from Asia, the *Histoire des deux Indes* condemns itself to spend its three remaining volumes examining the encounter of history with nature, whether humanity in its natural or savage condition or the natural environment untouched by humans. Of this the theatre must be a New World where there is no history.

CHAPTER 15

American savages and European barbarians: the invasion of the natural world

The natural man or *sauvage* – to use the French word is to distance ourselves and consider its meanings – is little in evidence on the coasts of the Indian Ocean or the China Seas, but occurs once on the sea routes to India. Before we consider the case of the Khoi peoples of the Cape of Good Hope – whose clicking speech brought them the Dutch name of 'Hottentots' – it is well to remember that Diderot, author of so much of the *Histoire*, was also the author of the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* (1772). Here a miserably frustrated French monk was shown in dialogue with happy Tahitians,[1] inhabitants of a natural society in which the men were interested only in morality and the women only in maternity, and the *philosophe*-navigator Bougainville was criticised for imposing on them a culture whose scientific curiosity was as restless and destructive as the religion of the *aumonier* and sprang from the reaction against it. But just as the *aumonier* was a fictional type[2] standing for the sexual repressiveness the *philosophes* never tired of denouncing in Christian celibacy, the Tahitians were fictional types standing for an uncomplicated natural condition which, since it was conceived in opposition to history, could never be encountered in the history of voyaging. A further dialogue makes it clear that the natural man, though naturally social, is almost unimaginable outside the society created by his legislators, with whose artificial restraints his unspoiled instincts are perpetually at war; and we know already that this is the point at which every legislator (Confucius excepted) invents religion and opens the door

[1] See Mason and Wokler, 1992, pp. 31–76, for the dialogue in English.

[2] The Cordelier Jean-Baptiste Lavaisse, the *aumonier* of Bougainville's voyage to Tahiti in 1768, is a singularly indistinct figure (Anon., *Bougainville et ses compagnons autour le Monde*, Paris, 1977, vol. 1, p. 72); but Antoine-Joseph Peruty, *aumonier* on his earlier voyage (1763) to the South Atlantic, was a Benedictine who on his return proposed a reform of his order, gave up his vows, was employed as a librarian by Frederick II, but became so convinced a Swedenborgian that he left the Prussian service and returned to Paris. This was how Enlightenment really worked, and Diderot must have known Peruty's story; but some of it postdated the *Supplément* and would not in any case have fitted Diderot's purposes (Gerbi, 1955, pp. 93–4; Peruty wrote against de Pauw's thesis of American degeneracy).

to priests. If the Tahiti of reality has customs and religion, its *aroha*[3] is already distorted by *tapu* and the Tahitians of the dialogue are figures in a landscape of utopia. There is then no society immune from the history in which Europeans are so far and so unhappily advanced.

In the case of the 'Hottentots', there is a passionate adjuration[4] – pathetic because retrospective – to flee and hide themselves at the approach of van Riebeek, founder of the Dutch colony. Not only will the Europeans rob and enslave them; the Dutch are worse than wild animals because they are hypocrites, entangled in a contradiction between virtue and practice, an unhappy consciousness which they will impose upon the children of nature the Hottentots are permitted by the rhetoric to be. And the authorial *moi* is himself entangled in these contradictions.

> Et vous, cruels Européens, ne vous irritez pas de ma harangue. Ni l'Hottentot, ni l'habitant des contrées qui vous restent à dévaster ne l'entendront. Si mon discours vous offense, c'est que vous n'êtes pas plus humains que vos prédecesseurs; c'est que vous voyez dans la haine que je leur ai vouée celle que j'ai pour vous.[5]

> [And you, barbarous Europeans, be not incensed at this harangue. It will neither be heard by the Hottentot, nor by the inhabitant of those regions which still remain for you to lay waste. If you should be offended at my words, it is because you are not more humane than your predecessors; it is because you perceive in the hatred I have avowed against them that which I entertain against you.][6]

But from this dystopia of self-hatred – the *moi* is as European as those he hates – from which even the *lumières* of the European do not deliver him or do the Hottentot much good, the *Histoire* passes without caesura to a benign account[7] of the laborious rustic economy of the Dutch colonists of the Cape, and even the pastoral economy of the *trekboeren* further out. Their virtuous candour and frankness is mentioned with no hint of the repressive teachings of *predikanten*; alone in the colonial world they labour alongside their slaves; and

> si les Hottentots avoient pu adopter ce gout, c'eût été un grand avantage pour la colonie: mais les foibles hordes de ces Africains qui étoient restés dans les limites des établissements Hollandois, périrent toutes dans un épidémie en 1713,[8]

[3] *Aroha*, a Maori term denoting the *agape* of a kinship society.
[4] HDI, 1, pp. 205–6 (Book 2, ch. XVIII). In part by Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 67.
[5] HDI, 1, p. 206.
[6] Justamond, 1, p. 234. The possibility that the reader is more humane, and is offended at being told he is not, is ruled out by the rhetoric of a guilt culture.
[7] HDI, 1, pp. 207–13. [8] Ibid. 1, pp. 211–12.

[if the Hottentots could have adopted this kind of taste, it would have been a very advantageous circumstance to the colony: but the small herds of these Africans that had remained within the boundaries of Dutch settlements, were all destroyed in the year 1713 by an epidemic disease,][9]

and among the survivors is to be found that educated 'Hottentot' mentioned by philosophers,[10] whom an overmastering impulse drove to go walkabout and never return. It is well to recall that historiography was still the child of rhetoric, and that the rhetorician's arts included that of telling two sides of the same story; but here rhetoric serves to expose both sides of the contradiction – to which rhetoric itself belongs – between history and nature. It is not clear that this Hottentot was right to do what his ancestors ought to have done at first encounter; and though appropriation and the multiplication of needs mark the plunge into the unhappiness of history, there may be moments when productive labour and exchange of services establish an economy, like that of Locke's second state of nature, very little discordant with the promptings of *l'esprit humain*. And whatever it was that drove Diderot to feel at the mere mention of Rousseau as if he had a damned soul at his side, it was not the historical scheme of Rousseau's two *Discours*, though something like it is operative here and throughout the *Histoire des deux Indes*.

This scheme becomes dominant as the *Histoire* turns – irrevocably, since there is no return – away from what we term the 'Old World', meaning the Eurasian continent and the chain of Afro-Eurasian seas from the English Channel to the Sea of Japan, with its scribal cultures narrating histories with which that of Europe and its 'ancients' can, however marginally, be connected. The remaining volumes are concerned with Europe's encounter with a 'New World', and the *Histoire des deux Indes* becomes an *histoire des deux mondes*. The 'New World' is not planetary in its extent, since it is confined to the three Americas – two continents and an archipelago – and three seas, the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico and the 'South Sea' or mid-American Pacific. There are other 'worlds' known but not yet explored: that of the African interior, and that mapped by navigation as associating the Australian continent with the Pacific island systems; but these appear only on the extreme margins of the *histoire des deux mondes*. The 'New World' is American, and it is terribly privileged – as neither Africa nor Oceania are – to act as an absolute 'other' in the European imagination: as a universe

[9] Justamond, I, p. 240. 'Herds' may be a clerical error replacing 'hordes'.

[10] He first appears in Kalb, 1731. See Prevost, 1745, V, p. 175; Rousseau, 1986, pp. 107–8; Millar, 1806, p. 143n. Rousseau cited the story in the Notes to Part II of the *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality*.

of newly encountered or discovered[11] humans, for whom it was hard to find a place in history as the Christians had constructed and the *philosophes* were reconstructing it. The *Histoire* is firm in denying that the pre-Columbian societies had any history of the sort a literate civilisation narrates of itself; if such records existed they were destroyed, or more probably they did not exist and were invented, by the barbarous and clerical Europeans of the conquest. The *nouveau monde* is thus removed into a world of 'nature', with which the 'history' of Europe comes into violent contact; it is as if 'history' were itself barbaric; but this confrontation is then rendered interior to Europe, since it is used to compel Europeans to ask themselves questions about the collisions with nature inherent in their own history, and the peoples outside of Europe remain peripheral to Europe's conflict with itself. To render both 'Europe' and 'history' problematic in fact tightened the association between them, and did not diminish the Eurocentricity of history.

The 'history' of the New World – if history is the proper word for it – is thus the history of three categories of humans: savages, settlers and slaves. The presence in 'history' of each was deeply problematic, most saliently so in the case of the European 'settlers' who precipitated the problem by their coming. Their actions are presented in a context of Europe's modern history, less as it was at the end of the fifteenth century when the voyages had been made than at the end of the eighteenth when the *Histoire* was being written.

L'histoire ancienne offre un magnifique spectacle. Ce tableau continu de grandes révolutions, de mœurs héroïques et d'événements extraordinaires, deviendra de plus en plus intéressant, à mesure qu'il sera plus rare de trouver quelque chose qui lui ressemble. Il est passé, le temps de la fondation et du renversement des empires! Il ne se trouvera plus, l'homme devant qui *la terre se taisoit*! Les nations, après de longs ébranlements, après les combats de l'ambition et de la liberté, semblent aujourd'hui fixées dans le morne repos de la servitude.[12]

[Ancient history presents a magnificent scene to our view. The successive representation of great revolutions, heroic manners, and extraordinary events, will become more and more interesting, the more uncommon it is to meet with incidents that bear any resemblance to them. The period of founding and subverting

[11] An objection may be entered here against the practice which grew up in 1992 and afterwards of denouncing the use of the words 'discover' and 'discovery' as if they necessarily entailed the claim that the 'discoverer' was the first human to arrive at the land 'discovered'. That was not how the word had normally been used, and works with such titles as *The Japanese Discovery of Europe, 1720–1830* (Keene, 1969) and *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (Lewis, 1982) have passed undenounced while conserving the proper usage. The assault on the concept of 'discovery' was a shot inaccurately aimed at a target deserving demolition: the assumption that a culture had no part in law or history until Europeans had discovered its existence and incorporated it in their sphere of knowledge.

[12] HDI, 11, p. 1. Perhaps Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 73.

empires is past. The man before whom *the world was silent*, is no more. The several nations of the earth, after repeated shocks, after all the struggles between ambition and liberty, seem at length totally reconciled with the wretched tranquillity of servitude.][13]

Within twenty years, the earth would again be in awe of a conqueror; and the *Histoire*'s conviction that the age of heroes was ended may be a warning to us in our own age of globalisation. It is also a reminder that the decades of French Revolution and Empire were a regression by the standards of the *philosophes*, who all believed that Europe had left an age of conquest and entered one of commerce; but this vision itself was provincially west European, the view from the battlefield of Fontenoy, not of Poltava, Belgrade, Kunersdorf or Warsaw, where the *fondation et renversement des empires* were still going on. And why had *commerce* proved to be the path to *servitude*? The *Histoire* continues:

On combat aujourd'hui avec la poudre, pour la prise de quelques villes, et pour le caprice de quelques hommes puissants: on combattoit autrefois avec l'épée, pour détruire et fonder des royaumes, ou pour venger les droits naturels de l'homme. L'histoire des peuples est sèche et petite, sans que les peuples soient plus heureux. Une oppression journalière a succédé aux troubles et aux orages; et l'on voit avec peu d'intérêt des esclaves plus ou moins avilis, s'assommer avec leur chaînes, pour amuser la fantaisie de leurs maîtres.

It is as if the wheel had returned to the point at which Voltaire and Emilie du Chatelet had found history not worth reading and had set out in search of the heroism of enlightenment, or as if Europeans were again a race of pygmies waiting for the fierce giants – this time not of barbarism but of revolution and romanticism.[14] The anomaly of the persistence of dynastic warfare in an age of commerce is not enough to explain a phenomenon whose origins may be cyclical.

L'Europe, cette partie du globe qui agit le plus sur toutes les autres, paroît avoir pris une assiette solide et durable. Ce sont des sociétés puissantes, éclairées, étendues, jalouses dans un dégré presque égal. Elles se presseront les unes les autres; et, au milieu de cette fluctuation continuelle, les unes s'étendront, d'autres seront resserrées, et la balance penchera alternativement d'un côté et de l'autre, sans être jamais reversée. La fanatisme de religion et l'esprit de conquête, ces deux causes perturbatrices du globe, ne sont plus ce qu'elles étoient. Le levier sacré, dont l'extrémité est sur la terre et le point d'appui dans le ciel, est rompu ou très-affoibli. Les souverains commencent à s'appercevoir, non pour le bonheur de leurs peuples, qui les touche peu, mais pour leur propre intérêt, que l'objet important est de

[13] Justamond, 11, p. 349. [14] NCG, pp. 102–4.

réunir la sûreté et les richesses. On entretient de nombreuses armées, on fortifie ses frontières, et l'on commerce . . .

Le temps n'est pas loin, où la sanction des gouvernements s'étendra aux engagements particuliers des sujets d'un peuple avec les sujets d'un autre, et où ces banqueroutes, dont les contrecoups se font sentir à des distances immenses, deviendront des considerations d'état . . . Et les annales des peuples demanderont à être écrites par des commerçants philosophes, comme elles l'étoient autrefois par des historiens orateurs.[15]

[Battles are now fought with cannon, for the purpose of taking a few towns, and of gratifying the caprices of a few powerful men: formerly they were fought with the sword, in order to overthrow and to establish kingdoms, or to avenge the natural rights of mankind. The history of the world is become insipid and trifling; and yet men are not become more happy. A regular and constant system of oppression has succeeded to the tumults and storms of conquest: and we behold, with a degree of indifference, the various ranks of slaves assassinating each other with their chains, for the amusement of their masters . . .

Europe, that part of the globe which has most influence over the rest, seems to have fixed itself on a solid and durable foundation. It is composed of communities that are almost equally powerful, enlightened, extensive and jealous. They will encroach perpetually upon each other; and in the midst of this continued fluctuation, some will be extended, others more limited, and the balance will alternately incline to different sides, without ever being entirely destroyed. The fanaticism of religion, and the spirit of conquest, those two disturbers of the universe, operate no longer as they have done. That sacred lever, whose extremity was attached to the earth and whose centre of motion was in heaven, is now broken, or much weakened: and kings begin to discover, not for the happiness of their people, which concerns them little, but for their own private interest, that the object of the first importance is to keep up trade and security. Hence large armies are kept up, frontiers are fortified, and trade is encouraged . . . .

The time is not far off, when the sanction of government will extend to the private engagements between subjects of different nations; and when those bankruptcies, the effects of which are felt at immense distances, will become concerns of government . . . and the annals of nations must hereafter be written by commercial philosophers, as they were formerly by historical orators.][16]

It is the vision of post-Utrecht enlightenment: the European republic of trading states which has succeeded empire and papacy, wars of religion and universal monarchy; but we look in vain for an explanation of the *morne servitude* which has rendered the life of Europe *sèche et petite*. Perhaps it was only in periods of heroic fanaticism that peoples knew what their rights were; the End of History and the Last Man were images visible on the eve of the Age of Revolutions (1789–1989) as they have become again on

[15] HDI, II, pp. 1–3. [16] Justamond, II, pp. 349–51.

its morrow. Perhaps there was something still amiss with the conduct of European commerce, making for wars between dynasts and the peoples who blindly followed them. The *Histoire* begins to depict an age in which wars of maritime commerce replace the old wars for living space on land.

La découverte d'un nouveau monde pouvoit seule fournir des aliments à notre curiosité. Une vaste terre en friche, l'humanité reduite à la condition animale, des campagnes sans récoltes, des trèsors sans possesseurs, des sociétés sans police, des hommes sans mœurs: combien un pareil spectacle n'eût-il pas été plein d'intérêt et d'instruction pour un Locke, un Buffon, un Montesquieu! Quelle lecture eût été aussi surprenante, aussi pathétique que le récit de leur voyage! Mais l'image de la nature brute et sauvage, est déjà défigurée. Il faut se hâter d'en rassembler les traits à demi-effacés, après avoir peint et livré à l'éxecration les avides et fèroces chrétiens, qu'un malheureux hasard conduisit d'abord dans cet autre hémisphère.[17]

[The discovery of a new world was alone sufficient to furnish matter for our curiosity. A vast continent, entirely uncultivated, human nature reduced to the mere animal state, fields without harvests, treasures without proprietors, societies without policy, and men without manners, what an interesting and instructive spectacle would these have formed for a Locke, a Buffon, or a Montesquieu! What could have been so astonishing, so affecting, as an account of their voyage! But the image of rude, unpolished nature is already disfigured. We shall endeavour to collect the features of it, though now half effaced, as soon as we have described, and delivered up to the execration of posterity, those rapacious and cruel Christians, whom chance unfortunately conducted to this other hemisphere.][18]

The image of commerce calls up the encounter with nature; and the *sauvage* whom we meet in the state of nature is a species radically different from the barbarian as he was in the age of barbarism and religion, the image of ourselves as we encounter the *sauvage*. There follows without any interval a history of European barbarism as manifest in the history of Spain,[19] from the time preceding the Roman conquest when the Atlantic coastlands were inhabited by a culture in which the men were hunters and agriculture was left to women, an employment ill-suited to their vulnerable and maternal bodies. We are to read the same analysis of the hunter cultures of Mexico, and the argument is not simply that the Spaniards were savages once, but that they are not much more than barbarians at the time of their encounter with the island populations of the Caribbean. The Visigothic conquest was followed by the Arab, and by centuries of feudal and religious warfare; the Christian kings delivered the people from serfdom but achieved

[17] HDI, II, p. 3. [18] Justamond, II, p. 351.
[19] HDI, II, pp. 3–7 (Book 6, ch. 11).

little more than the mobilisation of an *esprit national*. The narrative which Enlightened historians had constructed of European cultural recovery told of Italian commerce, liberty and learning, extended slowly through the French and English monarchies, the Burgundian and Netherlandish cities; it had little to say about Aragon, and less about Castile and Portugal, and Iberian history was easily excluded from the European mainstream. The conquistadors whom the *Histoire* depicts arriving in the islands and then in Mexico are little better than their Visigothic and Moorish ancestors, and medieval European culture has influenced them in only two ways; they are Christians, which means that they bring with them a legion of power-hungry and celibate priests, and they are chivalrous, which means that the conquest of the New World is carried out by

> des hommes de la première et de la dernière classe de la société; des brigands qui ne respiroient que la pillage et des esprits exaltés qui croyoient aller à la gloire. C'est pourquoi la trace de ces premiers conquérants fut marquée par tant de forfaits et par tant d'actions extraordinaires; c'est pourquoi leur cupidité fut si atroce et leur bravoure si gigantesque.[20]
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> [men of the highest and of the lowest class in society; robbers intent on nothing but plunder; and men of exalted minds, who imagined they were pursuing the road to glory. This is the reason why the vestiges of these first conquerors were marked by so many crimes, and by so many extraordinary actions; why their cupidity was so atrocious, and their bravery so astonishing.][21]

The barbarians of the *Decline and Fall* were not obsessed with heroic images, but epic and romance (which Spaniards notoriously lived as well as wrote) were still the art-forms characteristic of barbaric culture. What conclusively demonstrates the barbarism of the invaders of the New World is that they did not come in search of commerce, or even initially of conquest, but in the grip of an uncontrollable gold-fever. We are told about their first encounter with friendly naked people, who innocently presented them with gold ornaments, and there follows the outburst:

> Lecteur, dites-moi, sont-ce peuples civilisés qui sont descendus chez des sauvages, ou des sauvages chez des peuples civilisés? Et qu'importe qu'ils soient nus; qu'ils habitent le fond des forêts, qu'ils vivent sous des hutes; qu'ils aient parmi eux ni code de loix, ni justice civile, ni justice criminelle, s'ils sont doux, humains, bienfaisants, s'ils ont les vertus qui caractèrisent l'homme. Hélas! Par-tout on auroit obtenu le même accueil avec les mêmes procédés. Oublions, s'il se peut, ou plutôt rappellons-nous ce moment de la découverte, cette première entrevue des deux mondes, pour bien détester le nôtre.[22]

[20] Ibid. II, pp. 24–5 (Book 6, ch. VII).
[21] Justamond, II, p. 362.
[22] HDI, II, pp. II–12.

[Tell me, reader, whether these were civilized people landing among savages, or savages among civilized people? Of what consequence was it that they were naked; that they dwelt in the midst of the forests, and lived under huts; that there was neither a code of laws among them, nor civil or criminal justice, provided they were mild, humane, beneficent, and possessed all the virtues that distinguish the human species? Alas! People with the same behaviour would have met with the same reception every where. Let us forget, if it be possible, the instant of this discovery, this first interview between two worlds, or rather let us recall it to our memory, only to increase our detestation of the one we inhabit.][23]

It is not clear exactly why Europeans are to learn to detest themselves from this narrative. On one level a simple reversal of values is taking place: the savage is the civilised man and the civilised man is the savage, and the whole enterprise of civilisation has been nothing but a loss of innocence. On another, a historical distance separates the enlightened reader of 1780 from the gold-obsessed adventurer of 1492, and if the former is enjoined to reflect that he has still more in common with the latter than he likes to admit, the touchstone is not the innocence of the *sauvage* but the tensions within civilisation between the forces which enlighten the barbarism of the seagoing Visigoth and the forces which tend to perpetuate it. *Bien détester le nôtre*, then, is not an injunction to give up all hope of ever being better than the conquistador, but a reminder that the war within the breast of the *Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville* will never be over, and that civilised man is condemned to go on hating as much as he loves himself. The only alternative reading presupposes that ethno-cultural guilt can never be expunged; much later in the *Histoire*, a chivalrous Spanish commander who permitted an English warship to shelter from a hurricane in Havana harbour in time of war is addressed as 'Espagnol, race incompréhensible' and asked why he did not respect the 'sauvage innocent' who fell worshipping at his feet two hundred and fifty years earlier.[24] It is easy to engage in these distributions of guilt, especially when Spaniards are viewed as marginal to European history, itself sullied by their genocides and greeds.

The conquistadors inflict enormous damage on both America and Europe because they are interested only in gold and silver, and because the invaders of Peru – an even more criminal set of ruffians than the conquerors of Mexico – discover the mines of Potosi and set about exploiting them by slave labour. The appropriation of ore leads to the appropriation of labour, and land is appropriated in the first instance to command the labour of its inhabitants. There arises a wholly extractive economy which, because it

[23] Justamond, II, p. 361. [24] HDI, III, p. 565 (Book 14, ch. XXVI).

does not render land productive for purposes of exchange, scarcely deserves the name of commerce at all; the Spanish *établissements* are the permanent bases of barbarians who have turned from raiding to conquest. And the silver they convert into bullion returns to Europe to be spent on the wars of religion; the Dutch, the English and belatedly the French learn to invest it as capital, but the Spaniards never master this economic skill, and from the *destruccion de las Indias* and the *leyenda negra* the history of Spain is conducted through the sombre drama of international decline of which students of politics had been writing since the early seventeenth century. The burden of the Spanish, and in Brazil the Portuguese, extractive economies continues to weigh on Europe and retard its enlightenment, and the *Histoire*'s programme for analysing and remedying this great malfunction has only begun. The book is to be a tract for the times.

The barbarian character of the Iberian invasion of America – which we must remember is not metaphor but diagnosis – is not explained solely by the marginalisation of Spanish history in the late-medieval European story. Its causes are not peculiar to Spain or to Portugal. As the narrative turns to the inroads of the latter nation, a new enquiry begins into the processes of socialisation, and it is asked whether the mere act of sailing and settling beyond seas is not fatal to the human character;[25] a hypothesis which necessarily makes the whole enterprise of commerce, and with it enlightenment, highly precarious.

> L'esprit national est le résultat d'un grand nombre de causes, dont les unes sont constantes, et les autres variables. Cette partie de l'histoire d'un peuple est peut-être la plus interessante et la moins difficile à suivre. Les causes constantes sont fixées sur la partie du globe qu'il habite. Les causes variables sont consignées dans ses annales, et manifestées par les effets qu'elles sont produits. Tant que ces causes agissent contradictoirement, le nation est insensée. Elle ne commence à prendre qui lui convient, qu'au moment où ses principes spéculatifs conspirent avec sa position physique. C'est alors qu'elle s'avance à grands pas vers la splendeur, l'opulence et le bonheur qu'elle peut se promettre du libre usage de ses ressources locales.
>
> Mais cet esprit, qui doit présider au conseil des peuples, et qui n'y préside pas toujours, ne règle presque jamais les actions des particuliers. Ils ont des intérêts qui les dominent, des passions qui les tourmentent ou les aveuglent; et il n'en est presque aucun qui n'élevât sa prospérité sur la ruine publique. Les métropoles des empires sont les foyers de l'esprit national, c'est-à-dire les endroits où il se montre avec la plus d'énergie dans le discours, et où il est le plus parfaitement dédaigné dans les actions. Je n'en excepte que quelques circonstances rares, où il s'agit du salut général. A mesure que la distance de la capitale s'accroît, ce masque se détache. Il tombe sur la frontière. D'un hémisphère à l'autre que devient-il? Rien.

[25] Discussed by Pagden, 1993, ch. 5.

Passé l'équateur, l'homme n'est ni Anglais, ni Hollandais, ni François, ni Espagnol, ni Portugais. Il ne conserve de sa patrie que les principes et les préjugés qui autorisent ou excusent sa conduite. Rampant quand il est foible; violent quand il est fort; pressé d'acquèrir, pressé de jouir; et capable de tous les forfaits qui le conduiront le plus rapidement à ses fins. C'est un tigre domestiqué qui rentre dans la forêt. La soif du sang le reprend. Tels se sont montrés tous les Européens, tous indistinctement, dans les contrées du Nouveau-Monde, où ils ont porté une fureur commune, la soif de l'or.[26]

[A national spirit is the result of a great number of causes, some of which are permanent, and others variable. This part of the history of a people is perhaps the most interesting, and the least difficult to investigate. The permanent causes are to be found on the portion of the globe which they inhabit; the variable ones are consigned in their annals, and manifested by the effects which they have produced. While these causes act in opposition to each other, the nation is in a state of insanity, and doth not begin to recover its proper understanding, till the time when its speculative principles coincide with the nature of its situation. Then it is, that it advances rapidly towards that splendour, opulence, and felicity, to which it may be allowed to aspire from a free use of its local resources.

But this national spirit, which ought to preside in the counsels of the people, though it be not always to be found there, scarce ever regulates the actions of individuals. They have interests of their own, and passions which torment and blind them; and there is scarce any one who would not raise his prosperity upon the public ruin. The capitals of empires are the centre of the national spirit, that is to say, the places where it displays itself with the greatest energy in words, and where it is the most completely neglected in actions. I except only some unfrequent instances, where the general safety is at stake. In proportion as the distance from the capital increases, this mask detaches itself; it falls off on the frontiers; and, between one hemisphere and another, is totally lost.

When a man hath crossed the line, he is neither an Englishman, a Dutchman, a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or a Portuguese. He preserves nothing of his country, except the principles and prejudices which give a sanction to his conduct, or furnish him with an excuse for it. Servile when he is weak, and oppressive when he is strong; eager to acquire wealth, and to enjoy it; and capable of all the enormities which can contribute most speedily to the completion of his designs; he is a domestic tiger again let loose in the woods, and who is again seized with the thirst of blood. Such have all the Europeans indiscriminately shown themselves in the regions of the New World, where they have been actuated with one common rage, the passion for gold.][27]

The enlightenment which only commercial society can bring requires an intensive if not a stern *paideia*, and the socialising disciplines engender

[26] HDI, II, pp. 357–8 (Book 9, ch. 1). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 79.
[27] Justamond, III, pp. 263–4.

more hypocrisy than virtue. They function only in capital cities, where the court and the market and the *bon ton* and the *gens de lettres* and the *paradis des femmes* unite to do what they can, and even there produce a wearing of masks rather than a transformation of *moeurs*. Sociability decreases in direct relation to the distance from the metropolis – just as it did for the wanderers from Shinar – and there is no hint that it is maintained, let alone extended, by the exchange mechanisms of *le doux commerce*. The essential relationship between commerce and enlightenment is suddenly placed at risk, less by pessimism with regard to human nature than by the conviction (itself deeply antique) that only the *urbs* can civilise the *rus*; and if there can be no enlightenment in the provinces it follows with a dreadful certainty that there can be no peace beyond the Line, no law west of the Pecos or north of fifty-three. The crossing of blue water is the ultimate decivilising act; the disciplines of society function only by land, and there only in the city. It is as if Odysseus were to become Polyphemus on encountering Circe. The *Histoire*, a history of oceanic conquest and failed commerce, is compelled by its premises to ask whether either savage innocence or civilised sophistication can survive encounter with the unappropriable element of water. At the outset of the volume on the history of the archipelago, it confronts the seafarer and asks in terror whether he is not worse than the savage and more dangerous than the barbarian.

Cette métamorphose de l'Européen expatrié est un phénomène si étrange; l'imagination en est si profondement affectée, que tandis qu'elle s'en occupe avec étonnement, la réflexion se tourmente pour en découvrir le principe, soit dans la nature humaine en général, soit dans le caractère des navigateurs, soit dans les circonstances antérieures ou postérieures à l'événement.

On se demande si l'homme une fois affranchi, par quelque cause que ce soit, de la contrainte des lois, n'est pas plus méchant que l'homme qui ne l'a jamais sentie. Des êtres assez mécontents de leur sort, assez denués de ressources dans leur propre contrée, assez indigens ou assez ambitieux pour dédaigner la vie et s'exposer à des dangers, à des travaux infinis sur l'espérance vague d'une fortune rapide, ne portoient-ils au fond de leurs cœurs le germe fatal d'une déprédation qui dut se développer avec une celebrité et un fureur inconcevables, lorsque sous un autre ciel, loin de toute vindicte publique et des regards imposants de leurs concitoyens, ni la pudeur, ni la crainte n'en arrêtèrent pas les effets? L'histoire de toutes les sociétés ne nous prouve-t-elle pas que l'homme à qui la nature a accordé une grande énergie, est communément un scélérat?[28]

[This change of character, in the European who quits his country, is a phenomenon of so extraordinary a nature, the imagination is so deeply affected with

[28] HDI, III, p. 2 (Book 10, ch. 1).

it, that, while it attends to it with astonishment, reflection tortures itself in endeavouring to find out the principle of it, whether it exist in human nature in general, or in the peculiar character of the navigators, or in the circumstances preceding or posterior to the event.

It is a question which naturally occurs, Whether a man who is freed, by whatsoever cause, from the restraint of the laws, be not more wicked than the man who hath never felt this restraint? Persons who are sufficiently dissatisfied with their lot, sufficiently deprived of resources in their own country, sufficiently poor, or sufficiently ambitious to entertain a contempt for life, and to expose themselves to infinite dangers and labours, upon the precarious hope of making a rapid fortune, do they not carry about with them the fatal seeds of a spirit of depredation, which must unavoidably have manifested itself with inconceivable rapidity and violence when they came into another climate, far from the effects of public resentment, and when they were no longer awed by the presence of their fellow-citizens, or restrained by shame or fear? Doth not the history of all societies prove to us, that those men on whom nature hath bestowed an extraordinary degree of energy, are most commonly villains?][29]

The navigator is depicted as a criminal because he can no longer be depicted as a barbarian; we are no longer dealing with historically backward Portuguese and Spaniards, but with Dutch, French and English corsairs from the most advanced *états policés* in Europe, whose conduct in the Americas is no better and requires a different explanation. And it is no longer enough to examine the causes of the genocides which take place along the lines of encounter; the states of Europe have to be interrogated regarding their capacity to govern their *expatriés*, to involve them in processes of commerce and enlightenment, failing which their own civilisation will be retarded. The *Histoire* is not sanguine.

Maudit soit donc le moment de leur découverte! Et vous, souverains Européens, quel peut être le motif de votre ambition jalouse pour des possessions, dont vous ne pouvez qu'éterniser le misère? et que ne les restituez-vous à elles-mêmes, si vous désespérez de les rendre heureuse? Dans le cours de cet ouvrage, j'ai plus d'une fois osé vous en indiquer les moyens: mais je crains bien que ma voix n'ait crié et ne crie encore dans le désert.[30]

[Accursed, therefore, be the moment of their discovery! And you, European sovereigns, what motive can excite your jealous ambition for possessions, the misery of which you can only perpetuate? And why do ye not restore them to themselves, if ye despair of making them happy? I have, more than once, ventured, in the course of this work, to point out to you the means of accomplishing this: but I am much afraid that my voice hath only exclaimed, and will only exclaim in the desert.][31]

[29] Justamond, III, p. 385. [30] HDI, III, p. 3. [31] Justamond, III, pp. 386–7.

The *moi* crying in the wilderness is required to supply a new philosophic history, which will trace the establishment of Europeans in the *nouveau monde* and indicate how, if at all possible, they can be developed from boatloads of marauders into civilised commercial beings; he has yet to show himself well equipped to describe the political economy of colonies of settlement. The individual who leaves his society to cross water and encounter another is little better than a beast of prey; but could not societies themselves be transplanted? The problem is one of sexuality.

N'auroit-il pas été plus humain, plus utile et moins dispendieux, de faire passer dans chacune de ces régions lointaines quelques centaines de jeunes hommes, quelques centaines de jeunes femmes? Les hommes auroient épousé les femmes, les femmes auroient épousé les hommes de la contrée. La consanguinité, le plus prompt et le plus fort des liens, auroit bientôt fait, des étrangers et des naturels du pays, une seule et même famille.[32]

[Would it not have been a more humane, more useful, and less expensive plan, to have sent into each of those distant regions some hundreds of young men and women? The men would have married the women, and the women the men of the country. Consanguinity, the tie that is the most speedily formed, and the strongest, would soon have made one and the same family of the strangers and the natives.][33]

It is not explained how the colonists would have been discouraged from marrying each other and setting up a lilywhite aristocracy of sahibs and memsahibs. The Enlightened faith in philoprogenitiveness is being permitted the assumption that miscegenation would have cleared the way for gender to do its work; men and women of both races would have civilised one another in a four-way relationship. In history it happened otherwise, and there are several studies of the impact of all-male bands of conquistadors on the New World. The companions of Hernan Cortes come first, and we learn that their encounter was with Mexican hunting cultures, in which the labour of agriculture was imposed upon the women, while the long journeys of the men in pursuit of game encouraged pederastic couplings. Doña Marina, the concubine of Cortes, and other women who defected to the Spaniards, did so out of a frenzied desire (*fureur*) for straight sex,[34] and perhaps also for maternity in the spirit of Diderot's Tahitiennes – though we learn elsewhere that the misery of women in such cultures drives them to infanticide. But the theme of miscegenation is not much taken up, and creole society is nowhere identified as mestizo. Other communities of male European seafarers appear; first the buccaneers proper, the cattle-farming

[32] HDI, II, p. 358, following the passage just quoted at n. 21. Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 79.
[33] Justamond, III, pp. 264–5. [34] HDI, II, pp. 25–6 (Book 6, ch. VII).

boucaniers of the Honduras coasts, whose bonded male partnerships may remind us of the Mexican hunter cultures and give way to unsentimentally contractual marriages when European women are disembarked.[35] There follow the filibusters, the *flibustiers* or Brethren of the Coast, 'hommes extraordinaires et romanesques' in whom the release of energy consequent on desocialisation rose above the criminal to the heroically barbaric and the acceptance of a discipline of honour. The love of glory compensated for the lack of a *patrie*; but the problem to be solved is why, exposed to the same torrid climate as the heirs of the conquistadors, the filibusters did not follow them in sinking into creole lethargy.[36] The explanation is, once again, that they were French, English and Dutch, and had

> vécu dans les entraves des gouvernements Européens. Le ressort de la liberté comprimé dans les ames depuis des siècles, eut une activité incroyable, et produit les plus terribles phénomènes qu'on ait encore vus en morale. Les hommes inquiets et enthousiastes de toutes les nations, se joignirent à ces aventuriers au premier bruit de leurs succès. L'attrait de la nouveauté, l'idée et le desir des choses éloignées, le besoin d'une changement de situation, l'espérance d'une meilleure fortune, l'instinct qui porte l'imagination aux grandes entreprises, l'admiration qui mene promptement à l'imitation, la necessité de surmonter les obstacles où l'imprudence a précipité, l'encouragement de l'exemple, l'égalité des biens et des maux entre des compagnons libres; en un mot, cette fermentation passagère que le ciel, la mer, la terre, la nature et la fortune avoient excite dans les hommes tour-à-tour couverts d'or et de haillons, plongé dans le sang et dans la volupté, fit des flibustiers un peuple isolé dans l'histoire, mais un peuple éphémère qui ne brilla qu'un moment.[37]
>
> [lived under the shackles of European governments. The spirit of liberty being repressed for so many ages, exerted its power to a degree almost inconceivable, and occasioned the most terrible effects that were ever exhibited in the moral world. Restless and enthusiastic men of every nation joined themselves to these adventurers, as soon as they heard of the success they had met with. The charms of novelty; the idea of, and desire excited by, distant objects; the want of a change in situation; the hopes of better fortune; the impulse which excites the imagination to the undertaking of great actions; admiration, which easily induces men to imitation; the necessity of getting the better of those impediments that are the consequences of imprudence; the force of example; and the being equally partakers of the same good fortune among those who have frequently associated together; in a word, the temporary ferment which all the elements together, with several accidental circumstances, had raised in the minds of men, alternately elevated to the greatest prosperity, or sunk in the deepest distress, at one time stained with

[35] Ibid. III, pp. 25–8 (Book 10, ch. VIII). [36] Ibid. III, pp. 32–54 (Book 10, ch. X).
[37] Ibid. III, pp. 52–3. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 82.

blood, at another revelling in voluptuousness, rendered the freebooters a people wholly distinct in history; but a people whose duration was so transient, that its glory lasted, as it were, but a moment.][38]

In all of this the *Histoire* is elaborating upon a chapter of Voltaire's, from which we learn that the source is Esquemeling's (in French Oexmelin's) *History of the Buccaneers* or *Histoire des Aventuriers*, and where the parallel with primeval Rome, that stronghold of brigands, is at least twice drawn.[39] No Romulus of the Spanish Main formed these sea-going Cossacks into a warrior republic which might have altered the history of the Caribbean and the Isthmus. It might also, of course, have repeated the history of Rome. The terrible power of exploding *libertas* might have achieved an *imperium* it could not sustain, and the journey from Romulus to Augustus might have been trodden once more. It was Jefferson, not Diderot, who effected the dream of a liberty capable of empire.

Since we know, as the authors of the *Histoire* apparently did not, that Castile was as legalistically governed as England or France, we are aware that the above description applies equally well to the conquistadors, and that the filibusters were saved for romantic legend by the circumstance that they never reached the mines or became *encomienderos*. They figure in the story after the degeneration of mainland Spaniards into the lassitude of creole culture, and in this narrative European women and an extractive economy play their part, the former not facilitating and the latter inhibiting the establishment of an active commerce. The premise that Spain and its empire lack a modern history, however, so operates that the history of *criollismo* is removed from the mainland to the islands.

To effect this removal, the whole second volume of the 1780 edition is required, and we do not in fact meet the filibusters until well into the third. Not all the populations encountered by the first Spaniards are *sauvages innocents*; the harsh and sexually distorted hunter cultures are 'savages' as they appear in the light of history, not nature. As the Spaniards penetrate Mexico, there appear first the Tlaxcaltecs, who are allowed to have erected something like a Spartan or Roman republic,[40] and then the imperial and city-building Aztecs. There ensue ten pages[41] of invective against the Spanish accounts of the civilised if terrible grandeur of this culture, in which conquistadors and clerics are denounced for having exaggerated Aztec greatness in order to magnify their own achievements, for the folly of

[38] Justamond, III, p. 443.
[39] *Essai sur les Moeurs*, Pomeau, 1963, II, ch. CLII, in particular pp. 375–6, 377, in the edition cited in NCG.
[40] HDI, II, pp. 30–2 (Book 6, ch. VII). [41] Ibid. II, pp. 42–52.

supposing that their inventions would serve their purpose even if true, and for the imbecility – 'stupides relateurs' – of supplying an account which demonstrates its own falsity. Behind this rhetoric, designed to leave the Spanish chroniclers and scholars damned whatever they say, lies an intention to demonstrate that the Aztecs could not have constructed more than 'une bourgade formée d'une multitude de cabanes rustiques répandues irrégulièrement sur un grand espace'.[42] Without the use of iron, they could not have cut stone, cleared forests or conducted an agriculture; without an alphabetic script, they could not have organised an *état policé* or recorded their history; without the use of money, they could have organised human labour only by despotic compulsion. It has much earlier been laid down that the cathedrals of medieval Europe are no index to a civilised society since – apart from being an imitation in stone of the forests of the druids – they are the work of a clerically organised peasantry whose dues were paid in kind.[43] It was the use of money and of letters, Gibbon wrote, which distinguished a civilised people from a herd of savages;[44] measured by these standards, the Aztecs fell short of the Europeans, and could not have constructed the great buildings which the Spaniards described but of which they cannot show the ruins – whereas the ruins of Rome have survived even their Gothic ancestors.

The thrust of this argument is to reduce the Aztec level of civilisation towards savagery, but at the same time to degrade, not to justify, the Spanish achievement. The chroniclers of Spanish America are told that the world's horror at the genocide they carried out has led it to magnify their destructive exploits, and that the *moi* of the *Histoire* is defending them when he attacks their misguided self-glorifications.[45] The language is ironic and insincere; the target of the *Histoire*'s deconstruction is neither the Aztecs nor the conquistadors, but the clerical and baroque scholarship which had created a history of pre-Columbian civilisation. The authors of the *Histoire* deny this, so great is their determination to represent the Spanish and Portuguese colonies as merely exploitative economies incapable of developing a commerce or a culture; the neo-barbarism which follows navigation and expatriation is to be made as irreversible as possible. As the narrative moves from Mexico to Peru, the pattern is repeated with modifications. Here the subject is the alleged history of the Incas, whose culture is denied the character of an urban civilisation with as much vehemence as has been levelled against Spanish accounts of the Aztecs – the words 'il faut donc reléguer au rang des fables' are seven times repeated at the head of

[42] Ibid. II, p. 43. [43] Ibid. I, pp. 8–9 ('Introduction'). [44] Above, p. 38.
[45] HDI, II, pp. 50–2.

successive paragraphs.[46] But there is a countervailing warning against 'un pyrrhonisme, quelquefois outré, qui a succédé à une credulité aveugle',[47] and rashly refuses to accept the tradition of Manco Capac and his consort Mama Ocello. With these figures the legislator, that key actor in inventing the histories of the Old World, appears for the only time in that of the New, and has a highly specialised role to play in the strategies of the *Histoire des deux Indes*: that of instituting a utopia of benevolent despotism, which is to be carried on in the strangest utopia of modern history.

In a culture lacking property, taxation, money and writing, Manco Capac – almost but not quite the Confucius of the ancient New World – instituted a benign religion of sun worship, which avoided the worst consequences of the legislator's mistake, and differed from the holocaustic religion of fear which the catastrophic history of volcanic Mexico had occasioned among the Aztecs. It was part of a scheme aimed at assuring an economy of simple but massive distribution, in which nobody could multiply his needs, nobody could be deprived or oppressed, and everybody was happy; a benign despotism which continued the utopia of the *sauvage innocent* in a primitive form of *état policé*.[48] The *Histoire* is insistent that this achievement was not fictitious but historic.

> Cessons donc, cessons de regarder comme une imagination folle cette succession de souverains sages, ces générations d'hommes sans reproche. Déplorons le sort de ces peuples, et ne leur envions pas un triste honneur. C'est bien assez de les avoir depouillés des avantages dont ils jouissoient, sans ajouter la lâcheté de la calomnie aux bassesses de l'avarice, aux attentats de l'ambition, aux fureurs du fanatisme. Il faut faire de vœux pour que ce bel âge se renouvelle plutôt que plus tard dans quelque coin du globe.[49]
>
> [Let us therefore no longer consider, as the offspring of a wild imagination, this account of a succession of wise sovereigns, and of a series of generations among mankind existing without reproach. Let us rather deplore the fate of these people, and not envy them the sad remembrance of this honour. It is enough to have deprived them of the advantages which they enjoyed, without adding the baseness of calumny to the meanness of avarice, the outrages of ambition, and the rage of fanaticism. It is to be wished that this beautiful era may be renewed, sooner or later, in some quarter of the globe.][50]

But this wish that the golden age could be renewed in history has as its obverse the implication that the momentary achievement of utopia is all that has happened in the history of either pre-Columbian or Spanish America;

[46] Ibid. II , pp. 145–7 (Book 7, ch. VI). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 75.
[47] HDI, II, p. 144. [48] Ibid. II, pp. 139–44. [49] Ibid. II, p. 145.
[50] Justamond, III, p. 26.

a modern history of commerce and enlightenment is beyond either. In the latter history, the achievement of utopia is the work of the Jesuits, on a lesser scale in the Californian missions,[51] on a much greater in those of Paraguay. The latter story had as we have seen an exceptional if ambiguous status in Voltaire's *Essai sur les Moeurs*,[52] and this is enhanced in the *Histoire des deux Indes*. The *philosophes* commonly display a deep ambivalence towards the Jesuits, by whom some of them had been educated and whom they both admired and hated. In the Americas, the Society carries on the work of the Incas, so far as a religion founded on the ideas rather than the senses does not impede their doing so;[53] and it institutes a benign system of control whereby the needs of the populace are anticipated and met by a distribution of stored resources. Confession and penitence take the place of accusation and punishment, and the quasi-state established in Paraguay resembles nothing so much – celibacy alone excepted – as an enormous monastery. Even the exception just mentioned is not as important as may appear, since property is lacking and this is a major stimulus to population growth. Certainly, it follows that luxury and the unhappinesses of civilisation are absent also; but it is unlikely that the Guarani were truly happy, since their life under Jesuit rule was monastic rather than sociable. Like monks, they suffered from apathy.

La privation de toute propriété n'influoit-elle sur les liaisons les plus douces? Ce n'est pas assez pour le bonheur de l'homme d'avoir ce qu'il leur suffit; il lui faut encore de quoi donner. Un Guaranis ne pouvoit être le bienfaiteur, ni de sa femme, ni de ses enfants, ni de ses parents, ni de ses amis, ni de ses compatriots; et aucun de ceux-ci ne pouvoit être le sien. Son cœur ne sentoit aucun besoin. S'il étoit sans vice, il étoit aussi sans vertu. Il n'aimoit point, il n'étoit point aimé.[54]

[Did not also the privation of all property exert some influence over the most tender connections? It is not enough for the happiness of man that he should have what is sufficient for him; he must also have something to bestow. A Guarani could not be a benefactor to his wife, his children, his relations, his friends or his countrymen; neither could any of these do good for him. He felt no kind of appetency. If he was without vice, he was also without virtue; he neither loved nor was beloved.][55]

It was the standard indictment of the monastic community, and could be the indictment of most utopias; it had been brought by Aristotle against

[51] HDI, II, pp. 103–6 (Book 7, ch. XXIII).
[52] NCG, pp. 147–8; *Essai sur les Moeurs*, Pomeau, 1963, II, ch. CLIV (p. 387 for a comparison of the Jesuits and the Quakers); Imbruglia, 1983.
[53] HDI, II, pp. 277–8. The full account of Jesuit Paraguay occupies pp. 267–89 (Book 8, chs. XIV–XVII).
[54] Ibid. II, p. 288. [55] Justamond, III, p. 186.

Plato's republic. But was this apathy simply the product of the communism imposed by the self-defeating benevolence of the Jesuits, or was it also a characteristic of the propertyless savage? In the state of pre-social innocence, benevolence and affection were supposed to arise from the natural promptings of the heart; the *Histoire* explains at length how *les enfants sauvages* show unlimited love and deference towards their parents precisely because there is no family discipline and no expectations of inheritance;[56] but if, on the other hand there can be no benevolence without benefaction, no benefaction without giving, and no giving without possession, the heart itself is embarked on the fatal journey towards property, society and the restless and perpetual pursuit of happiness. It must never be forgotten that the social philosophers of the eighteenth century were not confused; if they made contradictory statements, it was in the full knowledge that society and history were themselves paradoxical and contradictory conditions.

Paraguay, together with Potosi, is crucial in the *Histoire*'s account of Spanish America, because in the conditions imposed by the most violent of extractive economies the perpetuation of utopia by benign despotism is the only historical alternative open to the Jesuits. It is a utopia also in the framework of the Society's own European history; like the filibusters, the Fathers and their flocks are 'un peuple isolé dans l'histoire . . . un peuple ephémère qui ne brilla qu'un moment'. The Jesuits in Europe perpetuate the most *infâme* of civil and political evils, the claim to social authority on autonomous spiritual grounds; but Paraguay is a theocracy in which the two become one.[57] The Church taught Christianity to the barbarians in order to make itself stronger than society; the Jesuits teach it to the savages to found civil society where it had not existed before. As we saw in the case of Tibet, theocracy is not necessarily objectionable; it is the separation of spiritual from civil authority which is unforgivable. The irony of history swept away the experiment of Paraguay because civil society in Europe had decided to make an end of the Jesuits forever; utopia was the victim of history; but that priests of all people, and Jesuits of all priests, had created a utopian society in America was an instance of the utter reversal of values characteristic of the New World, where the history of barbarism and the barbarism of history, in the forms of an economy of plunder and clerical inquisition, came in direct contact with the natural condition of *l'homme sauvage*. With the fall of the Jesuits and the liquidation of the missions, the question arose of what economy would now be imposed on the Guarani,[58]

[56] HDI, II, pp. 101–3 (Book 6, ch. XXIII). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 74.
[57] Ibid. II, pp. 278–9, 286–7. [58] Ibid. II, pp. 389–90.

and with it the larger question of whether the *leyenda negra* would continue into new chapters, or some kind of enlightening commerce take shape in the Spanish and Portuguese establishments.

There had been some gleams of light even in the history of Mexico. The Jesuits had entertained the project of an empire in California out of which a true commerce might have developed, and Cardinal Alberoni had formed a great project of a trade in textiles between India and America, involving the creation of a commercial foyer in the Philippines and the construction of a Panama canal. The *Histoire* considers the Philippines and Marianas as an extension of the West rather than the East Indies; the Manila galleon – and in another history, the presence of the *waka* or ocean-going canoe[59] in the Marianas – open up the vision of a trans-Pacific commerce. But the galleon is geared to the purposes of the disastrous Mexican economy, and the *waka* – 'le plus parfait bateau qui ait jamais été imaginé' – exists nowhere else in the world;[60] it is not invoked to explain the community of language between Tahitians and Maori, whose islands must be the peaks of a now sunken continent.[61] The problem of islands recalls once more the *Histoire*'s conviction that oceanic migration is a deeply decivilising experience. How were the doubly barbarised Spaniards of the *race incompréhensible* to be converted into social beings, whose *établissements* were political economies and civil societies?

The text presents both Spain and its empire as a history of unlimited disaster; only in the future, though perhaps an urgently immediate one, is there any prospect of enlightenment.

L'empire des Espagnols sur le Nouveau-Monde s'établit dans un siècle d'ignorance et de barbarie. Tous les principes de gouvernement étoient alors oubliés; et l'on ne s'étonnera pas, sans doute, que dans l'ivresse de leurs triomphes, des conquérants superbes n'aient pas ramené la lumière, bannie depuis dix ou douze siècles de l'Europe entière –[62]

[The empire of the Spaniards over the New World was established in an age of ignorance and barbarism. All the principles of government were then forgotten; and we need not certainly be surprised, that in the intoxication of their victories, a set of proud conquerors should not have restored knowledge, which had been banished from Europe for ten or twelve centuries past –][63]

[59] The Polynesian word *waka* (or *va'a*) does not occur in the *Histoire*, and the French *bateau* may be more acceptable to moderns than *canot* or 'canoe', which carry unwelcome primitivist connotations (R.Walker, 1990, p. 25). Perhaps these shallow-draft craft, driven by sail and paddle, could be called 'galleys' instead; but they had oceanic capability unknown in the ancient Mediterranean.

[60] HDI, II, pp. 96–7 (Book 6, ch. XXII).

[61] Ibid. II, pp. 4–7 (Book 10, ch. 1).

[62] Ibid. II, p. 315 (Book 8, ch. XXX).

[63] Justamond, III, pp. 216–17. Note his translation of *lumière*.

and only then making its way back through the commerce and learning of Italy.

Semblable aux Visigots, dont ils étoient les descendants ou les esclaves, les Espagnols partagèrent entre eux les terres désertes et les hommes qui avoient échappés à leur épée.[64]

[The Spaniards, the descendants or slaves of the Visigoths, like them, divided among themselves the desert lands, and the men who had escaped their sword.][65]

Where subjugated Romans had retreated into the celibacy of the cloister, some Indians abandoned the world by refusing to perpetuate their species and resorting, it would seem, to onanism. A curse of sterility fell on the New World.

Ainsi, la terre fut doublement souillée; du sang des pères, et du germe des enfants.

Dès-lors, cette terre fut comme maudite pour ses barbares conquérants. L'empire qu'ils avoient fondé s'écroula bientôt de toutes parts. Les progrès du dèsordre et du crime furent rapides. Les forteresses les plus importantes tombèrent en ruine. Il n'y eut dans les pays ni armes, ni magasins. Le soldat qui n'étoit ni exercé, ni nourri, ni vêtu, devint mendiant ou voleur. On oublia jusqu'aux elements de la guerre et de la navigation, jusqu'au nom des instruments propres à ces deux arts si nécessaires.

Le commerce ne fut que l'art de tromper. L'or et l'argent, qui devoient entrer dans les coffres du souverain, furent continuellement diminués par la fraude, et reduits au quart de ce qu'ils devoient être.[66]

[Thus the earth was stained with the blood of the fathers, and deprived of the succeeding generation.

From this period the country seemed to lie under a curse with respect to these barbarous conquerors. The empire they had founded began to tend to general destruction. Profligacy and corruption made a rapid progress among them. The most important fortresses were suffered to decay. The country was left without arms or magazines. The soldiers, who were neither exercised, fed, nor clothed, became beggars or thieves. The first principles of war and navigation were forgotten, as well as the very names of the instruments made use of in these two necessary arts.

Trade consisted only in the art of cheating. The gold and silver, which were to be brought into the king's coffers, were fraudulently diminished, and reduced to a fourth part of the sum they ought to have produced.][67]

This portrait of decadence succeeding immediately to barbarism, without any interval of civilisation, foreshadows a joke which Europeans have since enjoyed making about Americans; but it is the decay of Old Castile as

[64] HDI, II, p. 327 (ch. XXXII). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 77.
[65] Justamond, III, p. 229. [66] HDI, II, pp. 328–9.
[67] Justamond, III, p. 231. He is bowdlerising the French of the first sentence quoted.

well as of New Spain. The language – much and justly resented by Spanish Americans – is drawn from the angriest rhetoric of the *arbitristas*, and encapsulates their belief that an economy which merely extracted silver from America and expended it on wars without learning how to invest it, inflicted disaster on the empire as a whole. By now there are creole populations in the New World, made up of Spanish settlers of both sexes; but the failure of an extractive economy based on slave labour to make them productive farmers capable of commerce leads to their decline as a people, whose offspring are excluded from office in favour of the European-born. The portrait of a creole culture, lethargic, passionate and pallid, begins to emerge and will dominate the remainder of the *Histoire des deux Indes*. The central problem becomes the failure of navigation to establish commerce, that is to say populations capable of producing for a market of free labour; and whereas the problem in the Old World was that of despotism, which kept the Asian populations below that level of capacity, the problem in the New, where the indigenous populations have been enslaved or exterminated, is the inability of the European immigrants – south of the Mason–Dixon line – to rise above creole level and take their place. This inability might be simply the consequence of emigration – the loss of culture was perhaps irremediable; it might be the result of climate – the whole debate over the degeneracy of species in the New World swung into place at this point; or it might be the result of history – the presumed incapacity of Spain to take part in the recovery of Europe. Raynal's team of *philosophes* were not jurists, and did not make use of the argument that the barbarian invaders of Roman Europe had established free tenures and ancient constitutions, thus fitting themselves to take part in free commerce when the latter was developed by the free cities; and it was easy, in any case, to see Spain as somehow excluded from this process. Thus the conquest of America could be presented as a simple continuation of European barbarism, and the discovery of the compass, usually considered an engine of recovery, as operating to perpetuate that barbarism in a new form. The *Histoire* begins to put forward programmes for Spanish recovery – agriculture and industry, freedom of commerce and immigration, the abolition of clericalism in all its forms – programmes entirely modern, equating commerce and enlightenment, and bringing to an end the neobarbarism which the conquest of the New World has entailed upon Spain and Europe. The eighth book of the *Histoire* closes with an injunction to the present and future Bourbon kings of Spain, putting them in mind of the guilt they have inherited with their crown and for once invoking some image of pre-Columbian civilisation in telling them how they may absolve themselves.

L'avenir ne vous pardonnera que quand les moissons germeront de tant de sang innocent dont vous avez arrosé les campagnes, et qu'il verra les espaces immenses que vous avez devastés couverts d'habitants heureux et libres. Voulez-vous savoir l'époque à laquelle vous serez peut-être absous de tous vos forfaits? C'est lorsque ressuscitant par la pensée quelqu'un des anciens monarques du Mexique ou du Pérou et le replaçant au centre de ses possessions, vous pourrez lui dire: VOIS L'ÉTAT ACTUEL DE TON PAYS ET DE TES SUJETS; INTERROGE-LES ET JUGE NOUS.[68]

[Posterity will not forgive you, till harvests shall arise in those fields which you have manured with so much innocent blood, and till those immense spaces you have laid waste shall be covered with happy and free inhabitants. If ye would know the period in which you may perhaps be absolved of all your crimes, it will be when you shall revive, in idea, some one of the ancient monarchs of Mexico and Peru, and placing him in the midst of his possessions, shall be able to say to him, BEHOLD THE PRESENT STATE OF YOUR COUNTRY, AND OF YOUR SUBJECTS; INTERROGATE THEM, AND FORM YOUR JUDGMENT OF US.][69]

The judgement of nature in America; perhaps the judgement of history in Europe.

We begin to see what this liberation from the past may involve when we reach the end of the ninth book and the second volume of the 1780 edition. Book IX has been a history of, first, the Portuguese in Brazil, taking us through innocent savagery – no possible ancient civilisation making its appearance here; next, the Spanish and Portuguese explorations of the Amazon, the interlude of Dutch conquest – where an apocalyptic sermon by Antonio Vieira calls forth the remark that in 1640 he was still living in the age of St Bernard, but that much has happened since then;[70] the Jesuit missions once more, and the not too hopeful prospect that commerce and enlightenment may civilise even the Paulistas. But Brazil remains a creole economy, founded on gold and diamond mining and the subjection of the Indians to tutelage; and this has served to undermine the growth of a viable economy in Portugal itself. The book closes with an analysis of the Methuen treaty between Portugal and Britain, which has given the English a monopoly of the Portuguese wine trade and subjected the rest of the economy to the importation of English goods.[71] The English – the Scots do not appear in this story – have understood that the way out of their national dissensions and towards greatness lies in the pursuit of commerce rather than of empire. Together with the Dutch, whom they now surpass,

[68] HDI, II, p. 356 (Book 8, ch. XXXV). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 78.
[69] Justamond, III, p. 263.
[70] HDI, II, pp. 381–6 (text of sermon in full), 390 (Book 9, chs. IX and X). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 80.
[71] HDI, II, pp. 447–52 (Book 9, ch. XXVII).

they conduct the commerce which the Iberian extractive empires have failed to set up for themselves; but liberty and enlightenment have brought them a hegemony of the oceans which they are now converting – we read this later – into a new form of universal monarchy. They are exercising an imperialism of enlightenment, which has had the effect of altogether inhibiting in Portugal the spread of 'la lumière qui brilloit dans l'Europe entière'. Such is the fate of the first Europeans to enter the Indian Ocean, delayed from the first volume.

This is the effect of English virtue, though it may also prove its corruption. The English have not created, they have merely profited by, the dreadful disequilibrium which the barbaric conquest of the New World – we might expect to read also of the monopoly commerce with the Indian Ocean – has brought upon Europe generally. But all that has enabled them to escape the barbarism of the extractive empires – the political freedom, the freedom of belief, the freedom of commerce – is now permitting them to impose upon Europe the monopolistic system which Europe has, in a sense, imposed upon itself. *Libertas* is once again the source of *imperium*. The *Histoire des deux Indes*, we might say, is dominated by three great love–hate relationships: with society and history themselves, with the Jesuits, and now with the English; and the account of Portugal under the Methuen Treaty closes with a vision of liberation through the establishment of free trade with the New World.[72] This will have to be a European liberation, a confederation of states to throw off the British hegemony, an extension of enlightenment to those states who exiled themselves from it by renewing the barbarism of conquest. We are going to find out that it can only be achieved through the re-creation of a strong French navy, and that the first objective of enlightenment must be a reversal of the verdict of 1763.

[72] Ibid. II, pp. 452–63 (Book 9, ch. XXVIII).

CHAPTER 16

Slaves and settlers: the sugar islands in the new geopolitics

The *sauvages innocents*, and much of the confrontation between history and nature, disappear as the *Histoire* begins its treatment of the *grand archipel* called 'les Antilles' or 'the West Indies', since the indigenous peoples are held to have been exterminated in the islands. We are left with two populations: the creoles and the slaves; and the character of the former changes radically in proportion as they are no longer Spanish, but French, English, Dutch or Danish. They are no longer to be explained by the hypothesis that the Iberian peninsula is a specially barbarous part of Europe and had no share in its renaissance; and the *Histoire* is forced to ask a question which we have already seen considered.

Des hommes civilisés ayant tous vécu dans leur patrie sous des gouvernements, sinon sages du moins anciens; ayant tous été nourris dans des foyers où ils avoient reçu les leçons et quelquefois l'exemple des vertus; tous élévés au centre de villes policées où l'exercise d'une justice sevère les avoit accoutumés à respecter leurs semblables, auront-ils tous, tous sans exception, une conduite que l'humanité, leur intérêt, leur sûreté, les premiers lueurs de la raison proscrivent également, et continueront-ils à devenir plus barbares que le sauvage? En serai-je donc reduit à ne tracer que d'affreux tableaux? Bon Dieu! A quel ministère étois-je reservé? Cette métamorphose de l'Européen expatrié . . .[1]

[Is it possible that civilized men, who have all lived in their country under forms of government, if not wise, at least ancient; who have all been bred up in places where they were instructed with the lessons, and sometimes with the example of virtue; who were all brought up in the midst of polished cities, in which a rigid exercise of justice must have accustomed them to respect their fellow-creatures; is it possible that all such men, without exception, should pursue a line of conduct equally contrary to the principles of humanity, to their interest, to their safety, and to the first dawnings of reason; and that they should continue to become more barbarous than the savage? Shall I for ever be reduced to the necessity of presenting

[1] HDI, III, pp. 1–2 (Book 10, ch. 1). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 82. See above, p. 280.

none but horrid images? Good God! For what an office was I destined? This change of character, in the European who quits his country . . .][2]

etc., as we have read already; this passage precedes and introduces the studies of the navigators, the buccaneers and the filibusters. From the presumption that Spain has no history but that of barbarism and religion, the *Histoire* moves to the presumption that those who voyage beyond the seas leave their society and their history behind them, and stands amazed at the consequences of its own deconstructions. But as the European populations in the islands cease to be Spanish, they cease to be mere gold-seekers and conquistadors, and an economy of plunder is converted into a plantation economy producing by cultivation crops exportable to a market. This rests upon African forced labour, and the brutality of conquerors is changed into the brutality of slaveowners; none the less, there is now a society engaged in agriculture and commerce. Here the *Histoire* should provide a philosophic history of how the *Européen expatrié* behaves, both when these forces establish society around him, and when the all-male fraternities of plunder resume a humanly normal gender structure with the advent of European women who are not the gypsies, tramps and thieves conspicuous in the earlier shiploads, and marriage resumes its crucial role in a society progenitive and patriarchal, productive and proprietary, religious and civil. This major theme, however, is touched on only marginally; the *Histoire*'s third volume is preoccupied with the growth of Anglo-French competition for maritime empire and the growth of African slavery, and the re-creation of European sociability among those presumed to have lost what little they had of it receives a secondary treatment. There is a serious lacuna in this *histoire philosophique et politique* of enlightenment in the oceanic era.

Book x, which introduces the third volume, is a study of the rise of maritime power politics among European states. The dismemberment of Spanish empire in the islands is dated from the English seizure of Jamaica in Cromwell's Western Design. The transitory Dutch conquest of Brazil has been narrated earlier; and true to the standard accounts of Spanish decline, the Dutch, the English and belatedly the French develop a capitalist commerce which the Iberians cannot comprehend. This, however, takes the form of a still somewhat barbarous national rivalry, and the furious hatreds between the Dutch and English are lessened only by the wars against France after 1672 and 1688. The War of the Spanish Succession, while recognised as an epoch in the growth of maritime competition, has to be handled

[2] Justamond, III, pp. 384–5.

somewhat carefully, since the authors desire to minimise any supposed threat of French universal monarchy in Europe, while holding in reserve the charge against a British universal monarchy of the oceans; and Queen Anne is praised for the wisdom of abandoning the Dutch competitor to seek peace with France in 1713. This is a crucial moment in the history of enlightenment:

les années qui suivirent la paix d'Utrecht rappellèrent le siècle d'or à l'univers, qui seroit toujours assez tranquille, si les Européens qui ont porté leurs armes et leurs haînes dans les quatre parties du monde, n'en troubloient pas l'harmonie . . .

Quoique ce bonheur générale fut l'ouvrage de ceux que tenoient les rênes des empires, les progrès de la raison universelle y avoient quelque part. La philosophie commençoit à parler de l'humanité, que l'imposture ne cesse d'appeller un cri de révolte contre la religion. Les écrits de quelques sages étoient passés de leur cabinet dans les mains de la multitude; ils avoient adouci les mœurs. Cette modération avoit tourné les esprits à l'amour des arts utiles et agréables, et diminué du moins l'attrait que les hommes avoient eu jusqu'alors à s'égorger. La soif du sang paroissoit appaisée, et tous les peuples s'occupoient avec une grande ardeur, avec des lumières nouvelles, de leur population, de leur culture, de leur industrie.

Cette activité se faisoit sur-tout remarquer dans les Antilles . . . Il n'y a qu'une communication sûre et facile avec l'Afrique, avec les côtes septentrionales du Nouveau-Monde, et sur-tout avec l'Europe, qui puisse procurer à ces isles cette circulation libre du nécessaire qu'elles reçoivent et du superflu qu'elles donnent . . . L'espérance même qu'on avoit conçue que l'épuisement universel rendroit la tranquillité durable, enhardissoit les négocians les moins confiants à faire aux colons des avances, sans lesquelles, malgré tant de soins, les progrès auroient été necessairement fort lents. Ces secours assuroient et augmentoient la prospérité des isles, lorsqu'on vit crever en 1739 un nuage qui se formoit depuis long-temps, et qui troubla le repos de la terre.[3]

[The years succeeding the peace of Utrecht [recalled] the ideas of the golden age to the world, which would be always in a sufficient state of tranquillity, if the Europeans did not disturb its peace, by carrying their arms and their dissensions into every quarter of the globe . . .

Although this general happiness was to be attributed to those who held the reins of government, yet the improvement of reason contributed, in some degree, to produce it. Philosophy then began to lay open and recommend the sentiments of benevolence.[4] The writings of some philosophers had been made public, or dispersed among the people, and contributed to polish and refine their manners. The spirit of moderation had inspired men with the love of the more useful and pleasing arts of life, and abated, at least, the desire they till then had of destroying one another. The thirst of blood seemed to be assuaged, and all nations, with the assistance of the discoveries they had made, ardently set about the improvement of their population, agriculture, and manufactures.

[3] HDI, III, pp. 57–8 (Book 10, ch. XI). [4] Cf. the original French.

This spirit of activity exerted itself principally in the Caribbee Islands . . . Nothing but an easy and safe communication with Africa, with the northern coasts of the New World, but principally with Europe, can procure to these islands that free circulation of the necessaries of life they receive, and of those superfluities they give in exchange . . . The very hopes entertained that the general weakness would ensure a lasting tranquillity, encouraged the most cautious merchants to supply the colonists with goods in advance; a circumstance that contributed greatly to quicken the progress they made, which, notwithstanding all their care and attention, would otherwise have been very slow. These assistances ensured as well as increased the prosperity of the islands, till a storm, that had been a long time gathering, broke out in the year 1739, and disturbed the peace of the world.][5]

A free transatlantic commerce, then, is the force which can transform both Europeans and creoles into social and enlightened beings; but there is a cloud on the horizon. English and Scottish writers held generally that the transition from conquest to commerce began in 1713 because Europe had been delivered from the universal monarchy of Louis XIV – if indeed France did not still cherish such ambitions; but the authors of the *Histoire des deux Indes* are concerned with the threat of wars of conquest in a new form. Utrecht was the moment at which the English gave up their crusade against France and their alliance with their natural rivals the Dutch, and an interlude of peaceful commerce ensued. Here we are reading an implicit encomium upon the ministry of Walpole, elsewhere marked down as the advent of the moral and political corruption inevitable in a commercial society;[6] *beati pacifici*, nevertheless, and the *Histoire*'s image of England becomes as ambivalent as it will remain. What happens in 1739 is the price to be paid for English freedom of speech.

La populace de Londres, la plus vile populace de l'univers, comme le peuple Anglois, considéré politiquement, est le premier peuple du monde

– it does not consist of *canaille* but of prentices and clerks, 'vingt mille jeunes gens de famille élevés dans le négoce' – forces the parliament by mob action to inaugurate a cycle of blue-water wars which have endured to the time of writing.[7]

[The mob of London, the most contemptible of any in the universe, as the people of England considered in a political view are the first people in the world, abetted by twenty thousand young men, the sons of distinguished merchants (*sic*), beset the parliament house with clamours and threats, and influenced its deliberations.][8]

[5] Justamond, III, pp. 448–50.
[6] HDI, III, pp. 599–600 (Book 14, ch. XLV). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 91.
[7] HDI, III, p. 61 (Book 10, ch. XIII). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 83.
[8] Justamond, III, p. 453.

There ensues an account, and an indictment, of British popular imperialism not unlike those to be found in David Hume and Josiah Tucker.

Les Anglois, plus portés à s'affliger de la prospérité d'autrui qu'à jouir de la leur, ne veulent pas seulement être riches; ils veulent être les seuls riches. Leur ambition est d'acquérir, comme celle de Rome étoit de commander. Ils ne cherchent pas proprement à étendre leur domination, mais leurs colonies.[9]

[The English, more inclined to envy the prosperity of others than to enjoy their own, are not only desirous of becoming rich, but of being exclusively so. Their ambition is gain, as that of the Romans was empire. They do not properly seek to extend their dominion, but their colonies.][10]

Fuelled by the London mob and ambitious politicians, the appetite for commercial conquest becomes a hunger to destroy the commerce of others; it is barbarous in an almost oriental sense – 'comme un sultan au milieu de ses esclaves' – though it arises in the midst of conditions which otherwise produce enlightenment.

Anglois, l'avidité n'a point de terme, et la patience a le sien, presque toujours funeste à celui qui la pousse au bout. Mais la passion du commerce est si forte en vous, qu'elle a subjugué jusqu'à vos philosophes.[11]

[Englishmen, avidity knows no bounds; but patience hath its end, which is almost always fatal to those who urge it to that extreme. But the passion for trade exerts such influence over you, that even your philosophers are governed by it.][12]

Even after the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, French ministers failed to realise how utterly the English were controlled by this appetite – perhaps the French are by nature too carelessly happy to take either conquest or commerce very seriously – and did not anticipate the crowning wickedness of 1755, of which, it will be remembered, Gibbon was to write

the resentment of the French at our taking their ships without a declaration had rendered that polite nation somewhat peevish and difficult.[13]

The meiosis is enhanced by a reading of the *Histoire*, where there are three pages of invective against this international crime, culminating in a summons to the nations of Europe:

QU'ON SE REUNISSE CONTRE LE TRAITRE ET QU'IL SOIT EXTERMINE DE DESSUS LA SURFACE DE LA TERRE . . . Macbeth du poëte sera son image.[14]

[LET US ALL UNITE AGAINST THE TRAITOR, AND LET HIM BE EXTERMINATED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH . . . It will always call to mind the Macbeth of the poet.][15]

[9] HDI, III, pp. 65–6. [10] Justamond, III, p. 457. [11] HDI, III, p. 66.
[12] Justamond, III, p. 459. [13] A, p. 153; EEG, p. 94.
[14] HDI, III, pp. 67–9; here p. 68. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 83.
[15] Justamond, III, p. 462. See Bell, 2001, for an account of the rise of Anglophobia from these and other events.

It is, however, taking some time for the powers above to put on their instruments; the narrative proceeds through the victories under the ministry of Pitt to the British triumph of 1763. Nor is George III presented in the image of Queen Anne before him; like the execution of Admiral Byng, the overthrow of Pitt is described as a republican act, the ostracism of an over-powerful Themistocles, and the republican appetite for conquest continues after his fall with the capture of Havana by 'l'amiral Pockok'.[16] The face of the globe is altered after 1763; French power is extinguished in India, Canada and Louisiana, but persists in the islands, and it is a question whether the enormous burden of national debt will inhibit or compel Britain in the pursuit of further conquests. There is an unexpected ambivalence regarding the British decision against seeking universal empire in America. From the moment the ministry decided to take Canada in the place of Guadeloupe

> il perdit une occasion qui ne reviendra peut-être jamais, de s'emparer des portes et des sources de toutes les richesses du Nouveau-Monde. Il tenoit le Mexique par le golfe dont il avoit seul l'entrée. Un si beau continent tomboit de lui-même entre ses mains. On pouvoit l'attirer, ou par les offres d'une dépendance plus douce, ou par l'image et l'espérance de la liberté; inviter les Espagnols à sécouer le joug d'une métropole qui n'avoit des armes que pour opprimer ses colonies et non pour les defendre, ou tenter les Indiens de briser les fers d'une nation tyrannique. Peut-être l'Amérique entière eût changé de face; et les Anglois plus libres et plus justes que les autres peuples monarchistes, ne pouvoient que gagner à venger le genre-humain de l'oppression du Nouveau-Monde, et à faire cesser les préjudices qu'elle cause à l'Europe en particulier.[17]
>
> [From this time England lost the opportunity, which, perhaps, may never return, of seizing all the avenues, and making itself master of the sources of all the wealth of the New World. Mexico was in its power, as the English only were in possession of the gulf that opens the way to it; this valuable continent must, therefore, soon have become their property. It might have been allured, either by the offers of an easier government, or by the flattering hopes of liberty: the Spaniards might have been invited to shake off the yoke of the mother-country, which only took up arms to distress its colonies, and not to protect them; or the Indians might have been tempted to break the chains that enslaved them to an arbitrary government. The whole face of America might, perhaps, have been entirely changed, and the English, more free and more equitable than other monarchical powers, could not but be benefited by rescuing the human race from the oppressions they suffered in the New World, and by removing the injuries this oppression hath brought on Europe in particular.][18]

[16] HDI, III, pp. 72, 82, 83–5. Sir George Pocock (1706–92). A difficulty in spelling this surname persists to the present day.

[17] Ibid. III, pp. 88–9 (Book X, ch. XVIII).

[18] Justamond, III, p. 485.

There follows a remarkable vision of the huddled masses flocking into this empire of liberty.

Tous les sujets qui sont la victime de nos gouvernements, durs, exacteurs, violents et fourbes; toutes les familles ruinées par la levée des soldats, par le dégât des armées, par les emprunts de la guerre, par les infidelités de la paix; tous les hommes nés pour vivre et penser en hommes, au lieu d'obéir et servir en brutes; une multitude d'ouvriers sans travail; de cultivateurs sans terre; d'hommes éclairés sans emploi; des milliers de malheureux, auroient volé dans ces régions qui ne demandent que des habitants justes et policés, pour les rendre heureux. On y auroit sur-tout appellé de ces paysans du Nord, esclaves de la noblesse qui ne fait que les fouler; de ces Russes qu'on emploie comme le fer à mutiler le genre-humain, au lieu de bêcher et féconder la terre. Il en auroit péri sans doute un grand nombre dans ces transmigrations par de vastes mers en des climats nouveaux; mais c'eût été, sans comparison, un moindre fléau que celui d'une tyrannie lente et rafinée, qui sacrifie tant de peuples à si peu d'hommes. Enfin, les Anglois seroient bien plus glorieusement occupés à soutenir et favoriser une si heureuse révolution, qu'à se tourmenter eux-mêmes pour une liberté que tous les rois leur envient et tâchent de sapper au-dedans et au-dehors.[19]

[All these subjects, who are victims of the severity, exactions, oppression and deceit of arbitrary governments, all those families that are ruined by the raising of soldiers, by the ravages of armies, by the loans for carrying on war, and by the infractions of peace; all men born to think and live as men, instead of obeying and becoming subject like brutes, would have gladly taken refuge in those countries. These, as well as a multitude of workmen without employment; of husbandmen without land; of men of science without any occupation; and numbers of distressed and unfortunate persons, would have flown into these regions, which require only just and civilized inhabitants to render them happy. Above all, the peasants of the north, slaves to the nobility, who trample upon them, would certainly have been invited there: those Russian peasants, who are employed as executioners to torture the human race, instead of cultivating and fertilizing the earth. Numbers of them would certainly have been lost in these transmigrations through extensive seas, into new climates; but this would have been an infinitely less evil than that of a tyranny, working by slow and artful means, and sacrificing so many people to the wills of a small number of men. In a word, the English would have been much more gloriously employed in supporting and favouring so happy a revolution, than in tormenting themselves in defence of a liberty, that excites the envy of all kings, and which they endeavour, by every method, to undermine and destroy.][20]

The *philosophe* vision was not usually directed towards great *Volkerwänderungen*, and one wonders what has become of the principle that the *Européen expatrié* risks losing humanity altogether. It has been replaced

[19] HDI, III, p. 89.
[20] Justamond, III, pp. 485–6. 'They' in the penultimate line are the kings, not the English.

by something more than utopia: the vision of civil society established immediately upon the colonisation of continental space. We have grown so accustomed to associating such visions with the westward march of the United States frontier that we need to remind ourselves that the *Histoire*'s dream is probably set in Louisiana and California – it can hardly be Mexico – and envisages the Mississippi valley being colonised by ascent from New Orleans, rather than by the more laborious routes up the Mohawk or across the Alleghenies. The independence of the English colonies has scarcely yet appeared on its pages, and it is far from clear whether they are expected to take up the opportunity which the British have refused. The *Histoire* itself does not pursue these continental visions; it takes as its next task the history of how the trading nations of the *grand archipel de l'Amérique*

sont parvenues à l'élever à un degré d'opulence qu'on peut regarder, sans exagération, comme le premier mobile des grands événements qui agitent aujourd'hui le globe.[21]

[have been able to raise it to a degree of opulence, that may, without exaggeration, be considered as the first cause of all the great events that at present disturb the peace of the globe.][22]

This is to be a history of sugar and of slavery. Book XI embarks on a history of what little is known of Africa, from Ethiopia westward through Egypt to Morocco, and south to the coasts of the European slave trade. There is no doubt how this operates; it is part of the history of the human race –

Cet être si cruel et si sensible, si haïssable et si intéressant, malheureux dans la partie septentrionale de l'Afrique, éprouve un sort beaucoup plus affreux dans la partie occidentale de cette vaste region[23]

[This being, so cruel and so compassionate, so odious and so interesting, experiences a destiny infinitely more dreadful in the western part of this vast region][24]

– and of the European assault on the planet:

Les esclaves sont pour le commerce des Européens en Afrique, ce qu'est l'or dans le commerce que nous faisons avec le Nouveau-Monde. Les têtes de nègres représentent le numéraire des états de la Guinée. Chaque jour ce numéraire leur est enlevé; et on ne leur laisse que les choses qui se consomment. Leur capital disparoit peu-à-peu; parce qu'il ne peut se régénérer, en raison de l'activité des consommations. Aussi la traite des noirs seroit-elle déjà tombée, si les habitants

[21] HDI, III, p. 90. [22] Justamond, III, p. 487.
[23] HDI, III, p. 122 (Book II, ch. X).
[24] Justamond, IV, p. 36. It is possible to doubt whether the 'destiny' is slavery or pigmentation, though the former is the more probable. Some such words as 'unhappy even in the northern parts of Africa' have been omitted by the translator.

des côtes n'avoient communiqué leur luxe aux peuples de l'intérieur du pays, desquels ils tirent aujourd'hui la plupart des esclaves qu'ils nous livrent. C'est de cette manière que le commerce des Européens a presque épuisé de proche en proche les richesses commerçables de cette nation.[25]

[Slaves are to the commerce of the Europeans in Africa, what gold is in the commerce we carry on in the New World. The heads of the Negroes represent the specie of the state of Guinea. Every day this specie is carried off, and nothing is left them but articles of consumption. Their capital gradually vanishes, because it cannot be renewed, by reason of the speedy consumptions. Thus the trade for blacks would long since have been entirely lost, if the inhabitants of the coasts had not imparted their luxury to the people of the inland countries, from whence they now draw the greatest part of the slaves that are put into our hands. Thus the trade of the Europeans, by gradual advances, hath almost exhausted the only vendible commodities of this nation.][26]

The Europeans have not conquered Africa and enslaved its population. They have rendered slavery an exponentially increasing force by creating a demand for trade goods which the coastal peoples can satisfy only by procuring slaves from those of the interior; and as these become involved in demand and supply, enslavement spreads towards the heart of the continent. *C'est le commerce, c'est le commerce*; or rather, it is what becomes of commerce when it is not practised between partners in some degree equal. The trade in slaves for the Africans is precisely what the trade in wine is for the Portuguese under English domination; it renders them incapable of commerce properly understood. Whether the peoples of the interior whom the trade has not yet reached are *sauvages innocents* or inhabitants of a heart of darkness is difficult to tell. The *Histoire des deux Indes*, which makes great play with the concept of climate, has much less to say about race; but here we encounter the problem of why Africans have very dark skins. Theology, chemistry and physic have offered variously unconvincing explanations; and the *Histoire* takes off suddenly into a long disquisition, recalling both d'Alembert and Gibbon, on the unsatisfactory condition of human knowledge in every period of history.

On a vu dans tous les siècles et chez toutes les nations, les études naître, tomber et se succéder dans un certain ordre réglé. Cette inconstance, cette lassitude ne sont pas d'un homme seulement. C'est une vice des sociétés les plus nombreuses et les plus éclairées. Il semble que les sciences et les arts aient un temps de mode.

Nous avons commencé par avoir des érudits. Après les érudits, des poëtes et des orateurs. Après les orateurs et les poëtes, des métaphysiciens, qui ont fait place aux géomètres, qui ont fait place aux physiciens, qui ont fait place aux naturalistes et

[25] HDI, III, p. 147. [26] Justamond, IV, pp. 63–4.

aux chymistes. Le goût de l'histoire naturelle est sur son declin. Nous sommes tout entiers aux questions du gouvernement, de législation, de morale, de politique et de commerce. S'il m'étoit permis de hasarder une prediction, j'annoncerois qu'incessament les esprits se tourneront du côté de l'histoire, carrière immense où la philosophie n'a pas encore mis le pied.

En effet, si de cette multitude infinie de volumes, on arrochoit les pages accordées aux grandes assassins qu'on appelle conquérants, ou qu'on les réduisoit au petit nombre de pages qu'ils méritent à peine, qu'en resteroit-il? Qui est-ce qui nous a parlé du climat, du sol, des productions, des quadrupedes, des oiseaux, des poissons, des plantes, des fruits, des minéraux, des mœurs, des usages, des superstitions, des préjugés, des sciences, des arts, du commerce, du gouvernement et des loix? Que connoissons-nous de tant des nations anciennes qui puisse être de quelque utilité pour les nations modernes? Et leur sagesse et leur folie ne sont-elles pas également perdus pour nous? Leurs annales ne nous instruisent jamais sur les objets qu'il nous importe le plus de connoître, sur la vraie gloire d'un souverain, sur la base de la force des nations, sur la félicité des peuples, sur la durée des empires. Que ces beaux discours d'un général à ses soldats, au moment d'une action, servent de modèles d'éloquence à un rheteur, j'y consens; mais quand je les saurai par coeur, je n'en deviendrai ni plus équitable, ni plus ferme, ni plus instruit, ni meilleur. Le moment approche où la raison, la justice et la vérité vont arracher des mains de l'ignorance et de la flatterie une plume qu'elles n'ont tenue que trop long-temps. Tremblez, vous qui repaissez les hommes de mensonge, ou qui les faites gémir sous l'oppression. Vous allez être jugés.[27]

[In all ages, and among all nations, we have seen some studies prevailing, which were afterwards neglected, and succeeded by others in a kind of regular order. This fickleness and disgust are not the defects of one man alone; they are the vice of the most numerous and most enlightened societies. It should seem as if the arts and sciences had their periods of fashion.

We have begun by having erudite men. After these came the poets and orators. To the poets and orators succeeded metaphysicians, who gave way to geometricians, and these again to natural philosophers, which in their turn have been replaced by naturalists and chemists. The turn for natural history seems to be upon the decline. We are now entirely absorbed in questions of government, of legislation, of morality, of politics, and of commerce. If I might be allowed to hazard a prophecy, I should predict, that the minds of men will incessantly be turned towards history,[28] an immense career, in which philosophy hath not yet made any advances.

For, in fact, if from that infinite multitude of volumes, we were to tear out the pages bestowed upon great assassins, who are called conquerors, or reduce the accounts of them to a few pages, which even they scarce deserve, what would there be remaining? Who is it that hath spoken to us of the climate, of the soil, of productions, of quadrupeds, of birds, of fish, of plants, of fruits, of minerals,

[27] HDI, III, pp. 128–9 (Book II, ch. X). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 84.

[28] 'Du côté de l'histoire' might indicate a turn away from history. Should 'au côté' be substituted in the original? The edition of 1780 has 'du' (p. 129).

of manners, of customs, of superstitions, of prejudices, of sciences, of arts, of commerce, of government, and of laws? What do we know of a multitude of ancient nations, that can be of the least use to modern ones? Both their wisdom and their folly are equally lost to us. Their annals never give us any information upon those points which it most concerns us to know; upon the true glory of a sovereign, upon the basis of strength of nations, upon the felicity of the people, upon the duration of empires. Let those beautiful addresses of a general to his soldiers upon the point of action, serve as models of eloquence to the rhetorician; there can be no objection to this; but were I to get them by heart, I should neither become more equitable, nor more firm, nor more informed, nor a better man. The time draws near, when reason, justice, and truth, shall snatch out of the hands of ignorance and flattery, the pen which they have holden but for too long a time. Tremble, you who delude men with falsehoods, or who make them groan under the yoke of oppression. Sentence is going to be passed upon you.][29]

The rhetoric of Enlightenment was not at its most impressive when proclaiming in 1780 that philosophic history was still writhing under the heel of the kings and the humanists, and needed a revolution to set it free. Diderot may have been reflecting on the enterprise of the *Encyclopédie* and its next phase; Gibbon might have recognised in this passage one more attempt to chain the faculties to someone's chariot.[30] What is more remarkable is that all this is erected on the sole basis that it is difficult to account for the skin pigmentation of West Africans; a reminder of the terrifying and irrational importance which this problem has assumed in the Euramerican (and not only the Euramerican) mind. If the *Histoire* is trying to say that skin colour really does not matter very much, it is costing it a great deal of trouble to say so.

There is a long and deeply felt indictment of slavery, coupled with a history of European serfdom, which was at the point of being abolished 'dans la plus grande partie de l'Europe' – one wonders just how far east of France the *Histoire*'s understanding of this term extended – when slavery was re-imposed upon the Americas; needless to say, by the Spaniards in the first place.[31] But the guilt is shared by all European nations in the archipelago and on the continents; and the problem is to determine what part slavery has played in establishing the wealth of the islands, and what are the prospects that it may be changed. The resistance of transported Africans is mentioned regularly, and there are speculations on their capacity to set themselves free. Of the Maroons of Dutch Guyana we read:

Il me semble voir ce peuple esclave de l'Egypte qui, refugié dans les deserts de l'Arabie, erra quarante ans, tâta tous les peuples voisins, les harcela, les entama

[29] Justamond, IV, pp. 42–4. [30] EEG, pp. 215–16.
[31] HDI, III, pp. 186–205; for serfdom, pp. 191–3. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 85. Pagden, 1995, p. 169, suggests Jean de Pechmeja, another of Raynal's collaborators, as author of this passage.

tour-à-tour; et, par de légères et fréquentes incursions, prépara l'invasion de la Palestine. Si la nature forme par hasard une grande âme dans un corps d'ébène, une tête forte sous la toison d'un nègre; si quelque Européen aspire à la gloire d'être le vengeur des nations foullées depuis deux siècles; si même un missionnaire sait employer à propos l'ascendant continuel et progressif de l'opinion contre l'empire variable et passager de la force . . . Faut-il que la barbarie de notre police Européene inspire des voeux de sang et de ruine à l'homme juste et humain qui médite les moyens d'assurer la paix et le bonheur de tous les hommes?[32]

[Methinks I see those people who were slaves in Egypt, and who, taking refuge in the deserts of Arabia, wandered for the space of forty years, attempted to make incursions upon all the neighbouring people, harassed them, penetrated alternately among some of them, and by slight and frequent inroads paved the way for the invasion of Palestine. If nature should chance to add a great soul, and a powerful understanding, to the outward form of a Negro; if some European should aspire to the glory of being the avenger of nations that have been oppressed during two centuries; if even a missionary should know how to avail himself properly of the continual and progressive ascendant of opinion over the variable and transient empire of strength . . . Must the cruelty of our European policy inspire sanguinary ideas, and suggest plans of destruction to an equitable and humane man, whose thoughts are engaged in securing the peace and happiness of all mankind?][33]

The Maroons of Jamaica, on the other hand, were bought off by the offer of an English alliance against the slave rebellion of 1760;[34] but there is a French dream in which

un moment suffit; une descente heureuse à la Jamaïque peut faire passer des armes à des hommes qui ont l'ame ulcerée, et le bras levé contre leurs oppresseurs. Le François qui ne songera pas qu'à ruine à son ennemi, sans prévoir que la révolte des nègres dans une colonie les peut soulever dans toutes, ira hâter une révolution pendant la guerre. L'Anglois placé entre deux feux perdra sa force, son courage, et laissera la Jamaïque en proie à des esclaves et à des conquérants, qui se la disputeront par de nouvelles horreurs. Voilà l'enchaînement de l'injustice. Elle s'attache à l'homme par des noeuds qui ne se rompent qu'avec le fer. Le crime engendre le crime; le sang attire la sang, et la terre demeure un théâtre éternel de désolation, de larmes, de misère et de deuil, où les générations viennent successivement se baigner dans le carnage, s'arracher les entrailles, et se renverser dans la poussière.[35]

[In an instant it may cease. An enemy who should be so fortunate as to land at Jamaica, would soon convey arms to these men, who are full of rancour against their oppressors, and only wait a favourable opportunity to rise against them. The French, not considering that the revolt of the Blacks in one colony would probably occasion it in all the rest, will hasten such a revolution in time of war.

[32] HDI, III, pp. 307–8. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 87.
[33] Justamond, IV, p. 245. Observe how his translation omits skin colour and hair formation.
[34] HDI, III, pp. 558–64 (Book 14, ch. XXVI). [35] Ibid. III, p. 564.

The English, finding themselves between two fires, will be dismayed; their strength and courage will fail them; and Jamaica will fall a prey to slaves and conquerors, who will contend for dominion with fresh enormities. Such is the train of evils that injustice brings along with it! It attaches itself to man so closely, that the connection cannot be dissolved but by the sword. Crimes beget crimes; blood is productive of blood; and the earth becomes a perpetual scene of desolation, tears, misery, and affliction, where successive generations rise to imbrue their hands in blood, to tear out each other's bowels, and to lay each other in the dust.][36]

Images of a Jacques Dessalines or a John Brown before the event occur, but are checked by the thought, to be found also in Voltaire and Gibbon, that the natural rights of man may be claimed by means so ferocious that they lead only to greater evils.[37] If revolution is rejected there remains only the possibility of enlightenment; some kind of emancipation of slaves to become free labourers or peasant cultivators depends on the capacity of creoles to form self-governing societies, of European governments to construct a *police* of free and open commerce.

The Spaniards in Puerto Rico and Cuba, the Dutch in Guyana and Aruba, the Danes in the Virgin Islands, are warned in turn that weak states may be destroyed from within if they maintain corrupt monopolies in their colonial possessions; the last in particular that small states must grow great or disappear.[38] The history of commerce and colonisation is being considered solely within the context of the European history that conducts it as an enterprise Europeans may not be able to control; and when the *Histoire* turns its attention to the history of the French in the Caribbean archipelago, the question is asked whether the enterprise should even have begun.

Notre véritable bonheur exige-t-il la jouissance des choses que nous allons rechercher si loin? Sommes-nous destinés à conserver éternellement des goûts aussi factices? L'homme est-il né pour errer continuellement entre le ciel et les eaux? Est-il un oiseau de passage, ou ressemble-t-il aux autres animaux, dont la plus grande excursion est très limitée? Ce qu'on retire de denrées peut-il compenser avec avantage la perte des citoyens qui s'éloignent de leur patrie pour être détruits, ou par les maladies qui les attaquent dans la traversée, ou par le climat à leur arrivée? A des distances aussi grandes, quelle peut être l'énergie des loix de la métropole sur les sujets, et l'obéissance des sujets à ces loix? L'éloignement des témoins et des juges de nos actions, ne doit-il pas amener la corruption des mœurs, et avec le temps le déclin des institutions les plus sages, lorsque les vertus et la justice, leurs bases fondamentales, ne subsistent plus? Par quel lien solide une possession, dont un intervalle immense nous sépare, nous sera-t-elle attachée? L'individu, dont la vie se passe à voyager, a-t-il quelque esprit de patriotisme; et

[36] Justamond, v, p. 61.

[37] Trouillot, 1995, ch. 3, considers the role of the *Histoire* in rendering it hard for Europeans to comprehend the Haitian Revolution before or when it occurred.

[38] HDI, III, pp. 329–30 (Book 12, ch. XXXIII).

de tant de contrées qu'il parcourut, en est-il une qu'il continue à regarder comme la sienne? Des colonies peuvent-elles s'intéresser à un certain point aux malheurs ou à la prospérité de la métropole, et la métropole se rejouir ou s'affliger bien sincèrement sur le sort des colonies? Les peuples ne se sentent-ils pas un penchant violent à se gouverner eux-mêmes, ou à s'abandonner à la première puissance assez forte pour s'en emparer?[39]

[Doth our real happiness require the enjoyment of the things which we go in search of at such a distance? Is it our fate for ever to persevere in such factitious inclinations? Is man born eternally to wander between the sky and the waters? Is he a bird of passage, or doth he resemble other animals, whose most distant excursions are exceedingly limited? Can the articles of commerce we derive from thence be an adequate compensation for the loss of the citizens who leave their country, to perish, either by the disorders with which they are attacked during their voyage, or by the climate at their arrival? At such considerable distance, what influence can the laws of the mother-country have upon the subjects? And how will their obedience to those laws be enforced? Will not the absence of the witnesses and judges of our actions necessarily induce corruption in our manners, and occasion in time the subversion of the most wise institutions, when virtue and justice, which are the basis on which they are founded, shall no longer subsist? By what firm tie shall we secure a possession, from which we are separated by an immense interval? Hath the individual, who passes his whole life in voyages, any idea of the spirit of patriotism? And among all the countries he is obliged to traverse, is there any one which he still considers as his own? Can colonies interest themselves to a certain degree in the misfortunes or prosperity of the mother-country? And can the mother-country be very sincerely rejoiced or afflicted at the fate of the colonies? Do not the people feel a strong propensity, either of governing themselves, or of giving themselves up to the first power which hath strength enough to get possession of them?][40]

Both *commerce* and *établissements* are now being called in question. Since its dawn in Athens, Hellenic and European political philosophy had shown an occasional but powerful bias against seafaring and trade, a preference (shared by the *Tao Te Ching* at the other end of Eurasia) for keeping societies enclosed within the conditions it had devised for keeping them utopian communities; and here the principle laid down at the opening of the *Histoire* – that *c'est le commerce, c'est le commerce* which alone makes humans affluent and enlightened – is in collision with the philosopher's dread that to go voyaging is to lose touch with community and never recover it. If commerce cannot cross the oceans – can it traverse the trade routes of the continental interiors? – this is because it can subsist only between social and cultural systems; and the colonists and settlers who characteristically destroy the indigenous societies with whom they come in contact, are here being denied the capacity to cease being voyagers and birds of passage, and

[39] Ibid. III, pp. 331–2 (Book 13, ch. 1). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 88.
[40] Justamond, IV, pp. 271–2.

become social beings contained within systems they maintain as humans. In the last sentence quoted, a significant double standard begins to operate; they will become peoples and cast off the authority by which they were once governed, or – it is more an 'and' than an 'or' – they will fail to become peoples and must submit to the will of the first power to make them tributaries. Philosophy is reinforcing at its beginnings the long quarrel of Europe with its trans-oceanic settlements; its inability to believe that they will become nations, or to forgive them if they do.

However, we are looking here at the rhetoric of philosophy, and it is the function of rhetoric to state alternative possibilities with equal conviction; this indeed is why rhetoric is the parent of historiography. In both the eleventh and the thirteenth books of the *Histoire* – it is the thirteenth which opens with the passage just quoted – there is eloquent exposition of the prospects that the creoles, by now the settler population of the French islands, will develop into a civilised, a virtuous and even a martial people. The theory of climate, which imputes to the heat and humidity of central but not north America a power to weaken both indigenous and exogenous species,[41] is denied ultimate authority over the human; the latter can drain and cultivate, improving even the air, and there is a passage which indicates that the Europeans have drawn fever on themselves by clearing forests too fast and would do better to follow the more judicious cultivation of the pre-Columbian peoples.[42] The characteristics which seem to make the creoles an ethnic sub-species – languor, jealousy, pallor – are in part climatically induced, but are far more the products of a slave economy, in which they play the role of masters and are exposed to the restless unhappiness which afflicts kings and courtiers. If they could cease to be the masters of slaves and the subjects of distant monarchs, they might become

> le peuple le plus étonnant qu'on eût vu briller sur la terre. L'esprit de liberté qu'ils puiseroient au berceau, les lumières et les talents qu'ils hériteroient de l'Europe, l'activité que leur donneroit de nombreux ennemis à repousser, de grandes populations à former, une riche commerce à fonder sur une immense culture, des états, des sociétés à créer, des maximes, des loix et des mœurs à établir sur la base éternelle de la raison: tous ces ressorts feroient peut-être d'une race équivoque et mêlangée, la nation la plus florissante que la philosophie et l'humanité puissent désirer pour le bonheur de la terre.[43]

> [the most astonishing people that ever appeared on earth. The spirit of liberty which they would imbibe from their earliest infancy; the understanding and abilities

[41] Gerbi, 1955. [42] HDI, III, pp. 578–80 (Book 14, ch. XXXIV).
[43] Ibid. III, p. 230 (Book 11, ch. XXXI). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 86.

which they would inherit from Europe; the activity, which the necessity of repelling numerous enemies would inspire; the large colonies they would have to form; the rich commerce they would have to found on an immense cultivation; the ranks and societies they would have to create; and the maxims, laws, and manners they would have to establish on the principles of reason: all these springs of action would, perhaps, make of an equivocal and miscellaneous race of people, the most flourishing nation that philosophy and humanity could wish for the happiness of the world.][44]

This is the positive side of the medal; commerce, culture and society are achieving the previously apparent impossibility of rendering expatriate and desocialised voyagers a people more enlightened than the Europeans themselves. The vision is expressly said to be revolutionary, more so even than utopian. The young creoles are invited to return to Europe – leaving behind the enslaved Africans with whom their blood had better not mingle – and study virtue, which they must renew in the New World because they have become the symptom of its corruption in the Old.

L'Amérique a versé toutes les sources de la corruption sur l'Europe. Pour achever sa vengeance, il faut qu'elle en tire tous les instruments de sa prospérité. Détruite par nos crimes, elle doit renaître par nos vices.[45]

[America hath poured all the sources of corruption on Europe. To complete its vengeance, it must draw from it all the instruments of its prosperity. As it hath been destroyed by our crimes, it must be renewed by our vices.]

It is a complex reversal of roles. Europe has corrupted America, and America has corrupted Europe; but – *c'est le commerce, c'est le commerce* – a revolution is now possible in which the passage from the best to the worst becomes abruptly the passage from the worst to the best. This revolution is to be achieved by commerce, and commerce can exist only between societies equally valid; but it is being envisaged in and for America. Whether it will also be a renewal of Europe, and how America may look to Europeans engaged in some revolution of their own, is not made clear here, at the close of the eleventh book. The thirteenth, which opens with the negative rhetoric of commerce and colonisation, offers to trace the history of France in the islands and indicate measures by which Louis XVI's ministers might initiate there a commerce and civil society capable of regenerating each other. There ensue lengthy studies of Guadalupe, Martinique and San Domingo, where the production of sugar has become a dominant force in the world economy. While monopolised, this must be corruptive; and there follow – especially with respect to San Domingo – extremely detailed

[44] Justamond, IV, pp. 157–8. [45] HDI, III, p. 231.

proposals for the creation of a law of free property, a fiscal and military system, and a partly consultative government, which will break down the barriers between officials still expatriates and creoles on the way to becoming citizens, and institute a free commerce conducted by a civil society. Even the towns, which at present differ from those of Europe in that

> il n'y a ni de nobles, ni bourgeois, ni rentiers ... L'on vit sans distinctions, sans honneurs, sans plaisirs, et sans autre aiguillon que celui de l'intérêt,
>
> [they have neither nobles, tradesmen, nor annuitants ... There are no distinctions, no honours, no pleasures to be found, and no other stimulus beside that of interest,][46]

may become provincial capitals instead of the camps of transients they are at present.[47]

At this point, however, we lose sight of any proposal for the creation of a creole civilisation independent of Europe and renewing it. The thirteenth book closes with a call for that European revolution against the mutual corruption of the *deux mondes* which we failed to find at the end of the eleventh, but at the same time with an indication of a new force in the world which may set new limits to it: namely, the possible independence of English North America. The *Histoire* reverts to the theme which appeared in the ninth and tenth books: the universal monarchy of the seas attained by Britain in the peace of 1763, which has reduced the Portuguese economy to total subjugation and threatens the same fate for the rest of maritime Europe, while saddling the English with the huge burden of debt which is corrupting their liberties and driving them to further warlike initiatives. A revolution is needed to liberate Europe from this threat, and it can be achieved only through the re-creation of a strong French navy. The equation of enlightenment and commerce, fundamental to the *Histoire des deux Indes* from its first pages, suddenly flowers into a rhetoric of navalism, in which the geographic situation of France, both by sea and by land, renders her at once the destined liberator and the destined mistress – the language of gender is quite inescapable – of the commerce of a peninsular Europe delivered from insular hegemony.

> Douteroit-on que la France pût aspirer à ce genre de puissance? Voyez sa position. Assez vaste pour n'être dépendante d'aucune des puissances qui l'environnent; assez heureusement limitée pour n'être pas affoiblie par sa grandeur, cette monarchie est située au centre de l'Europe, entre l'océan et la mediterranée. Elle peut transporter toutes ses productions d'une mer à l'autre, sans passer sous le canon menaçant de Gibraltar, sous le pavillon insultant des Barbaresques. Ses provinces sont la plupart

[46] Justamond, IV, p. 404. Did 'bourgeois' signify 'merchants' or 'citizens'?
[47] HDI, III, pp. 447–8 (Book 13, ch. XLIV).

arrosées par des rivières où coupées par des canaux qui assurent la communication de ses terres centrales avec ses ports, de ses ports avec ses terres centrales. Un heureux hasard lui a donné des voisins qui ne savent pas fournir à leur subsistance, ou qui n'ont qu'un commerce purement passif . . .

Tous les peuples se disputent de l'ancien et du Nouveau-Monde; mais c'est encore plus par ses manufactures et par ses modes qu'elle a subjugué l'Europe et quelques parties de l'autre hémisphère. Les nations sont fascinées et n'en reviendront point. Les efforts qu'on a faits par-tout pour s'affranchir d'un tribut ruineux, en copiant cette industrie étrangère, n'ont eu nulle part le succès qu'on en attendoit. La fécondité de l'invention dévancera toujours la promptitude de l'imagination; et la légéreté d'un peuple qui rajeunit tout dans ses mains, qui vieillit tout chez ses voisins, trompera la jalousie et l'avidité de ceux qui voudront la surprendre en la contrefaisant. Quelle pourroit être la navigation d'un empire qui fournoit aux autres états les aliments de leur vanité, de leur luxe, de leur volupté?[48]

[If it should be doubted whether France can aspire to that kind of power, we have only to consider its position. Sufficiently extensive to prevent it from being dependent upon any of the surrounding powers, and yet so fortunately limited as not to be weakened by its extent, this monarchy is situated in the centre of Europe, between the ocean and the Mediterranean. It can transport all its productions from one sea to another, without passing under the threatening cannon of Gibraltar, or under the insulting flag of the Barbary powers. Most of its provinces are watered by rivers, or intersected by canals, which secure the communication between its inland countries and its ports, and between its ports and its inland countries. Its neighbours are, fortunately, not able to furnish their own subsistence, [and] carry on a trade that is merely passive . . .

Its productions, of the Old and of the New World, are eagerly sought after by all nations: but it is more especially by its manufactures, and by its fashions, that it hath subdued Europe, and some parts of the other hemisphere. The nations are fascinated, and will ever remain so. The endeavours which have every where been made to get rid of so ruinous a tribute, by imitations of this foreign industry, have nowhere had the expected success. The fertility of invention will ever be beforehand with the quickness of imitation; and the agility of a people, in whose hands every thing assumes a youthful appearance, and who have the art of making everything appear old among their neighbours, will deceive the jealousy and the avidity of those who endeavour to enter into a competition with them by imitation. How extensive might the navigation of an empire be, which furnishes to the other states the objects of their vanity, of their luxury, and of their voluptuousness?][49]

The liberty of Europe is to be the hegemony of France, and this is to be an empire of the fashion industries. The authors of the *Histoire* cannot have been writing without irony; they knew well enough that they were at the other pole from the innocence of nature for which they felt an unquenchable

[48] Ibid. III, pp. 499–500.

[49] Justamond, IV, pp. 462–3. Observe how easily this language might be applied to American cultural productivity in our own global economy.

nostalgia. We have entered the world of the pursuit of happiness, and the constant creation of new needs ensures that we will never catch it. The achievement of France is to have mastered the art of being as happy as possible in an unhappy world, and this justifies her in substituting her empire for that of the free but joyless islanders; the revival of French naval power is the precondition of enlightenment, even though it will impose passive commerce on others.

Telle est l'espérance de l'Europe. Elle ne croira pas sa liberté assurée jusqu'à ce qu'elle voie voyager sur l'océan un pavillon qui ne tremble point devant celui de la Grande-Bretagne. Le voeu des nations est maintenant pour la puissance qui saura les défendre contre la prétension d'un seul peuple à la monarchie universelle des mers; et il n'y a en ce moment que la France qui puisse les dèlivrer de cette inquiètude. Le système de l'equilibre ordonne donc que la cour de Versailles augmente ses forces navales d'autant plus qu'elle ne le peut sans diminuer ses forces de terre: alors son influence partagée entre les deux mers, ne sera plus redoubtable sur aucun qu'à ceux qui voudroient en troubler l'harmonie.

Et puisse avant que je meure, cette grande révolution déjà commencée, s'achever à la suite de quelques-unes des réformes que j'ai indiquées. Alors j'aurai obtenu la véritable récompense de mes veilles. Alors je m'écrierai: Ce n'est donc en vain que j'ai observé, réflichi, travaillé. Alors je m'addresserai au ciel, et je lui dirai: 'A présent tu peux disposer de moi, car mes yeux ont vu la splendeur de mon pays, et la liberté de mers restituée à toutes les nations.'[50]

[Such are the expectations of Europe. She will not think her liberty secured, till a flag shall be seen displayed upon the ocean that shall not tremble before that of Great Britain. The wishes of the nations are now united in favour of that power which may be able to defend them against the pretensions of one single people to the universal monarchy of the seas; and at this present period there is none but France that can free them from this anxiety. The system of equilibrium requires, therefore, that the court of Versailles should increase their navy, more especially as they cannot do it without diminishing their land forces. Their influence being then divided between the two elements,[51] will no longer be formidable on either except to those who should be desirous of disturbing the harmony.

Before I die, may this great revolution, already begun, be completed; together with other reformations which I have pointed out. Then shall I have obtained the true reward of my vigils. Then shall I exclaim: It is not in vain that I have observed, reflected and laboured. Then shall I address myself to Heaven and say: 'Dispose of me at present according to thy will, for mine eyes have seen the splendour of my country, and the liberty of the seas restored unto all nations!'][52]

So ends the thirteenth book; but there are six more to come.

[50] HDI, III, p. 508 (Book 13, ch. LVIII). Partly ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 90.
[51] Observe the translator's substitution of 'elements' for 'seas' [*mers*].
[52] Justamond, IV, pp. 472–3.

CHAPTER 17

Utopia and revolution: the northern continent in history

The *Histoire philosophique et politique* . . . has now become a state tract; a manifesto written to justify such a war as France was engaged in by 1780, directed against Britain in the name of Europe, with France at the head of a league of active allies and supportive neutrals, including the rebellious colonists of English North America. Gibbon was to serve the North ministry as a member of parliament, a government writer,[1] and an office-holder on the Board of Trade and Plantations, during the European and oceanic War of the American Revolution; in which period he published the first three volumes of his history, so that the *Histoire des deux Indes* may be said to contribute to the ideological and rhetorical climate of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The authors of the former would never have made the mistake of confounding the subject of the latter with the contemporary problems of the British empire; the differences between empires ancient and modern, military and commercial, continental and oceanic, were well known to them and form the connective tissue of their book. The relations between the two works as exemplifying philosophical history are therefore complex, which is not to say that they are negligible. At the point to which we have followed the *Histoire des deux Indes*, the focus is still on the sugar islands and will not shift from them; but the revolution in the colonies of the northern continent has begun to cast its shadow. We begin to be told of the role of New England shipping in the Caribbean ports of the triangle trade, and to hear that the temperate north must ever produce peoples capable of dominating the tropical south.[2] In the climactic invocations of a revived French naval power, it becomes unclear against whom the islands are now to be defended. Climate and the effects of slavery will prevent the Afro-Caribbeans from becoming their dominant populations; as for the

[1] The *Mémoire justificatif pour servir de réponse à l'Exposé des motifs de la conduite du Roi de France relativement à l'Angleterre*; MW, v, pp. 1–34.

[2] HDI, III, pp. 349–50 (Book 13, ch. VIII). Possibly Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 88. The New England merchants appear at p. 309 (Book 12, ch. XXVII).

European creoles, a presumably metropolitan readership is now told – in contradiction of what the creoles were told earlier – that they are like the populations of the Italian cities, open to every conqueror because they are interested only in enrichment and have never been citizens of a country or subjects of a government worth dying for.[3] (Gibbon's 'secret poison' may come to our minds.) Only a navy will hold the islands for France against Britain, but a new force has entered the equation.

C'est dans la position, c'est dans les intérêts, c'est dans l'esprit des nouvelles républiques, que nous allions étudier le secret de nos destinées.[4]

[It is in the position, in the interests, in the spirit of the new republics, that we must endeavour to explore the secret of our future destiny.][5]

These words conclude the fourteenth book, which has been a radically whiggish history of the English civil wars designed to explain the growth of emigration and the pursuit of maritime and commercial power, together with a history of Jamaica and the other English islands. In this, while the history of slavery receives due attention, the English planters are not designated as creoles or studied as a distinct subculture like their Spanish or French equivalents. The implication seems to be that English liberties are exportable; the colonial agents in London act as representatives,[6] and if there is a constitutional crisis it originates in the corruption of liberty, not its absence. But the emphasis is moving, within limits, from the island to the mainland colonies, and the remaining books, which make up the fourth volume of the 1780 edition, are devoted to the history of North America from Hudson Bay south to Florida, where the French have been driven from Acadia and Canada though they retain a footing in Louisiana.

Here we are in a different world because in a different climate: one descending from arctic in the north through temperate – though subject to violent changes of weather – as the survey moves south. There is a paradox here, in both the writing and the reception of the *Histoire des deux Indes*. On the one hand the climate is more benign, suitable to the settlement of free European cultivators and artisans, who will set up internal markets and legal property systems, avoiding the worst horrors of the extractive

[3] HDI, III, pp. 606–7 (Book 14, ch. XLVIII). [4] Ibid. III, p. 608.
[5] Justamond, V, p. 112.
[6] HDI, III, p. 520 (Book 14, ch. IV); coupled with a threat of revolution in both colonies and metropolis if the government becomes deaf to the voices of the representatives. 'Les contés se soulèveroient en Angleterre; les colonies se détacheroient en Amérique . . . L'empire entier tomberoient en confusion.' Appearing in 1780, this language recalls the Yorkshire Association of that year, and Herbert Butterfield's 'revolution that did not happen' (Butterfield, 1949).

slave economies and creole sub-cultures. On the other, and perhaps in consequence, the *Histoire* now makes commitments to climate theory large enough to entangle it, nearly for the first time, in the 'debate on the New World' initiated by Cornelius de Pauw. The two American continents, we hear, are geophysically younger than the Old World, and the universal deluge in which post-Christian *philosophes* still found reason to believe has had less time to evaporate.[7] Hence the ice and snows of the north and the humidity of the temperate regions – the encounter with the latter was so hard for Europeans to bear that it gave rise to much of their intemperate theorising – and a series of climates in which the larger mammalian species, which had in any case less time to develop, were small if autochthonous and prone to degenerate if introduced. The authors of the *Histoire* did not intend to develop de Pauw's theses in full, and presented middle North America as the sole New World zone in which autonomous European societies might develop. For this very reason they encountered the vigorous settler nationalism of the Anglophone colonies, in which Franklin and Jefferson took the degeneracy thesis as directed against them and attacked the *Histoire* for expounding it.

This was to do it less than justice; the human cultures of the New World are not dismissed as physically degenerate. The Inuit or 'Eskimaux' of the extreme north, though described with little sympathy, are not classed with Voltaire's Lapps as belonging to a different human species;[8] and the *sauvages*, or Algonquin, Sioux and Huron language-groups, are specifically said to be unlike the feeble, beardless and peaceable *sauvages innocents* encountered far to the south. They are warlike, rhetorical and passionate, given to the ritual torture and dismemberment of captives described at predictable length;[9] *sauvages* in the Lafitauan rather than Rousseauan sense that they belong to the heroic hunter cultures perceived as 'savage' at a pre-pastoral first stage of the movement out of nature into history. This does not mean that the myth of instinctive natural sociability is absent from the *Histoire*'s depiction of North America; it is very much present, but its representatives are not human beings. They consist of the beavers, *citoyens* of a *république* of co-operative dam-builders, in which

> chaque tribu vit dans son quartier, contente de son domaine, mais jalouse de la propriété qu'elle s'en est acquise par le travail,[10]

[7] HDI, IV, pp. 170–3 (Book 17, ch. LVI).
[8] 'Eskimaux', HDI, IV, pp. 184–7 (Book 17, ch. LIX); 'Lapons', IV, p. 15 (Book 15, ch. XXXI); NCG, p. 113.
[9] HDI, IV, p. 36 (fortitude under torture compared favourably with that of Christian martyrs).
[10] Ibid. IV (Book 15, ch. XXV).

[each party live in their own habitation, and are contented with it, though jealous of the property they have acquired in it by their labour.][11]

and this idyllically Lockean condition is none the worse because arrived at without the aid of language or reflective self-consciousness. The beaver dam is contrasted with the monastic community, and the Creator is ironically asked:

Qui est-ce qui chante le mieux tes louanges, l'être solitaire qui trouble le silence de la nuit pour te célébrer parmi les tombeaux, ou le peuple heureux qui, sans se vanter de l'instinct de te connaître, te glorifie dans ses amours, en perpétuant la suite et la merveille de tes créatures vivantes?[12]

[Who is it that best sings forth thy praises, the solitary being who disturbs the silence of the night to celebrate thee among the tombs, or the happy people who glorify thee, in perpetuating the wonder of thy works?][13]

The polemic against chastity should not mislead us. The religion of nature, in the eighteenth century as in the twenty-first, was bound sooner or later to lead to a dislike of human intelligence and the uses to which it was put. We read elsewhere that Alexander Selkirk on his island was happiest when he abandoned the self-consciousness which reminded him that he had a past and a future,[14] and the beavers are in a paradisal condition where they do not speak to God or know that one exists. As for the hunting savages and their unspeakably violent folkways, once they are extinct we shall probably believe in them no more than we do in centaurs and Lapiths, and may be persecuted by the priests if we do.[15] There are reasons for remembering them, but these are not simple.

Sans doute il est importante aux générations futures de ne pas perdre le tableau de la vie et des mœurs des sauvages. C'est peut-être à cette connoissance que nous devons tous les progrès que la philosophie morale a faits parmi nous. Jusqu'ici les moralistes avoient cherché l'origine et les fondements de la société, dans les sociétés qu'ils avoient sous leurs yeux. Supposant à l'homme des crimes, pour lui donner des expiateurs; le jetant dans l'aveuglement pour devenir ses guides et ses maîtres, ils appelloient mystérieux, surnaturel et céleste, ce qui n'est que l'ouvrage du temps, de l'ignorance, de la foiblesse ou de la fourberie. Mais depuis qu'on a vu que les institutions sociales ne dérivoient ni des besoins de la nature, ni des dogmes de la religion, puisque des peuples innombrables vivoient indépendants et sans culte, on a découvert les vices de la morale et de la législation dans l'établissement des sociétés. On a senti que ces maux originels venoient des fondateurs et des

[11] Justamond, v, p. 171. [12] HDI, iv, p. 60.
[13] Justamond, v, pp. 172–3. 'Sans se vanter de l'instinct de te connaître' not translated; nor are the quadruped 'amours'.
[14] HDI, iv, pp. 180–1 (Book 17, ch. lvii). [15] Ibid. iv, pp. 37–8.

législateurs, qui, la plupart, avoient crée la police pour leur utilité propre, ou dont les sages vues de justice et de bien public avoient été perverties par l'ambition de leurs successeurs et par l'altération de temps et des mœurs. Cette découverte a déjà repandu de grandes lumières; mais elle n'est encore pour l'humanité que l'aurore d'un beau jour. Trop contraire aux préjugés établis, pour avoir si-tôt produit de grands biens, elle en fera jouir, sans doute, les races futures; et pour la génération présente, cette perspective riante doit être une consolation. Quoiqu'il en soit, nous pouvons dire que c'est l'ignorance des sauvages qui a éclairé, en quelque sorte, les peuples policées.[16]

[It is no doubt important to the generations to come that we lose not the portrait of the life and manners of the savages. Perhaps it is to this knowledge that we owe all the advances that moral philosophy has made among us. Until the present, moralists sought the origin and foundations of society in those societies which they have before their eyes. Imputing crime to man that they might impose upon him expiation; casting him into blindness that they might be his guides and masters; they termed mysterious, supernatural and the work of heaven, all that is but the product of time, ignorance, weakness and deception. But now that we have seen social institutions derived neither from the needs of nature nor the dogmas of religion, since innumerable peoples live independently and without worship, we have laid bare the defects of morality and legislation in the very foundation of societies. We have realised that these original evils arose with the founders and legislators, most of whom erected civil government to serve their own interests, or whose wise views of justice and the common good were perverted by the ambition of their successors or by changes of time and customs. This discovery has greatly increased our enlightenment, but is as yet no more for humanity than the dawn of a better day. Too much at odds with established prejudices to have so far done great good, it will no doubt achieve it for races to come; as for the generation now living, this fair prospect must be our consolation. However that may be, we may pronounce that it is the ignorance of the savages that has in some measure enlightened the civilised nations.][17]

The polemic was directed against jurists before it was punctually turned against priests; but the function of innocent ignorance is to enlighten by reminding us that error and wickedness attend both the social and the historical condition. There will come a new day when we realise this fully and set about remedies; the Brutus who is to be born of this book is the opponent of Tarquin rather than of Caesar. But the loss of innocence when we entered upon history seems to be irremediable, and the savage who serves us as a heuristic device does not receive much counsel on how to maintain the condition he still occupies. He – the women are engrossed in the toils of agriculture – can still be praised for his lack of needs:

[16] Ibid. IV, pp. 38–9. [17] Trans. JGAP.

Demandez à l'homme civil, s'il est heureux? Demandez à l'homme sauvage, s'il est malheureux? Si tous deux vous respondent, NON: la dispute est finie.[18]

[Let us ask the civilised man whether he be happy, and the savage whether he be unhappy. If they both answer in the negative, the dispute is at an end.][19]

But the savage answers as he does because it has not occurred to him that he could be otherwise; his society is not perfect because he lacks the capacity for discontent or *angst*, which lead to the search for perfection even though they render it harder to attain. Unlike the beavers, the pre-encounter humans have not done much to change the environment of North America, and like them remain within its natural history.

Tout-à-coup l'homme y parut, et l'Amérique septentrionale changea de face . . . Quels ressorts puissants ont élevé ce merveilleux êdifice de l'industrie et de la politique Européene? Reprenons le tableau par ses details.[20]

[But man appeared, and immediately changed the face of North America . . . What powerful engines have raised that wonderful structure of European industry and policy? Let us resume the consideration of the particulars.][21]

'L'homme' is not necessarily European, but only Europeans perform a total human occupation of the environment. They do this by means of appropriation and cultivation, though we have been warned elsewhere that to treat lands occupied but not cultivated by *sauvages* as *terra nullius* is to restore the Hobbesian state of nature which we otherwise deny.[22] To occupy land by means of cultivation may be to some extent to escape the expatriation which desocialises the navigator, but the history of Canada is not free from the barbarism of extraction; fur takes the place of gold and slaves, and the Hudson Bay Company drives the Indians to make war on the beavers by precisely the means that drove coastal Africans to step up the trade in human beings. New France, with its clerics and seigneurs, has some of the characteristics of a creole culture, but the Acadians are permitted the honest simplicity of yeomen until deported by the English,[23] and Louisiana is made to voice an almost Lockean complaint at being deprived of the liberty which is the fruit of its labour when ceded to Spain against the wishes of its inhabitants.[24] Canada is more fortunate; under the English conquest a benign and almost over-generous statecraft allows it the blessings of *habeas corpus* and trial by jury,[25] and we look in vain for any *philosophe* equivalent of the wave of Protestant indignation against the Quebec Act of 1774, guaranteeing the position of the Catholic Church,

[18] HDI, IV, p. 181. [19] Justamond, V, p. 302. [20] HDI, IV, p. 182. [21] Justamond, V, p. 303.
[22] HDI, III, p. 366 (Book 13, ch. XIII). [23] Ibid. IV, pp. 224–6 (Book 17, ch. LXIV).
[24] Ibid. IV, pp. 119–20 (Book 16, ch. XLVI). [25] HDI, IV, pp. 196–8 (Book 16, ch. LIII).

which swept through English America, Britain and Protestant Ireland.[26] We are being presented with the image of a temperate North American zone, in which climate permits appropriation, civil and natural liberty, and the nightmares of expatriation and extraction do not take place. The French and English settlers are not filibusters or conquistadors; they have laws, and instead of breaking free of them bring them with them.

The English process of colonisation, however, is not a simple migration into an unoccupied Canaan. It is fuelled by religious enthusiasm and the English civil wars.

> La Nouvelle-Angleterre s'est signalée, comme l'ancienne, par des fureurs sanglantes. La fille se ressentit de l'esprit de vertige qui tourmentoit la mère. Elle dut sa naissance à des temps orageux; et les convulsions les plus horribles affligerent sa naissance.[27]

> [New England, like the mother-country, has signalised itself by many acts of violence, and has been actuated by the same turbulent spirit. It took its rise in troublesome times, and its infant state was disturbed with many dreadful commotions.][28]

We are in Protestant territory, and enthusiasm plays a leading role, uncommon in the Iberian colonies and unknown in the French. Emigrant Puritans set up a theocracy governed by the laws of a Mosaic republic, and impose the death penalty on Catholic priests and Quakers. The result is a melancholy and repressive society, probably fortified in its gloom 'par les vapeurs et les exhalations d'une terre nouvellement défrichée', which persecutes the Salem witches and then violently repents, and which imposes the severely moral code that calls forth the protest of Polly Baker.[29] Though a prosperous and commercial economy, Puritan New England is not the cradle of enlightenment or revolution. That role is reserved for Pennsylvania, and we see once again that it was less from Calvinism than from pietism that the *philosophes* expected the evolution of Christianity into undogmatic deism. Following Voltaire and Hume, the *Histoire* gives a history first of German Anabaptism – where the leaders of the Peasants' War made the mistake of preaching the rights of man to the oppressed without first enlightening the masters, which is 'déchaîner les animaux domestiques, et les changer en bêtes féroces'[30] – then of George Fox and William Penn, in

[26] Lawson, 1989. [27] HDI, IV, pp. 229–30. [28] Justamond, V, p. 355.

[29] HDI, IV, pp. 241–4 (Salem), 309–13 (Polly Baker); Book 17, chs. LXVII–LXVIII. Polly Baker's speech to a New England court – here given in full – justifying herself for increasing the population without benefit of wedlock, was an invention of Franklin's and a favourite with the *philosophes*. Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 95.

[30] HDI, IV, p. 268 (Book 18, ch. LXXIII). Ascribed to Diderot; Duchet, 1978, p. 95. For Voltaire on the Peasants' War, see NCG, pp. 139–41.

whom convulsionary enthusiasm insensibly but rapidly became the gentleness of naturally sociable manners. Penn is almost the Confucius of the western world,[31] except that the Chinese legislator was not involved in the supersession of enthusiasm, a phenomenon unknown to his culture as the *philosophes* saw it. Pennsylvania is a utopia, 'sans maîtres et sans prêtres', open to immigrants from all lands and practising an absolute liberty of worship for all sects, coupled with an absolute exclusion of theology from its institutions of public education.

> Ce sera l'unique contrée de l'univers où l'on ne se battra pas pour des mots, où l'on ne se haïra point pour des objets incompréhensibles. Si le despotisme, la superstition ou la guerre viennent replonger l'Europe dans la barbarie dont les arts et la philosophie l'ont tirée, ces flambeaux de l'esprit iront éclairer le nouveau-monde, et le lumière apparoîtra d'abord à Philadelphie.[32]
>
> [This will be the sole country in the universe where the people do not fight each other over words or hate each other for incomprehensible reasons. Tr. JGAP.] [If ever despotism, superstition, or war should plunge Europe again into that state of barbarism out of which philosophy and the arts have extricated it, the sacred fire will be kept alive in Philadelphia, and come from thence to enlighten the world.][33]

There could be no clearer intimation that the function of toleration is to repress dispute and theology, and to enact that the intellect has no role in defining the objects of worship or belief; religion is to be returned as far as possible to the popular cults of paganism. The theme is taken up in the concluding book:

> Tous les états devoient avoir à-peu-près le même code moral de religion, et livrer le reste, non pas aux disputes des hommes, qu'il faut empêcher quand elles peuvent troubler la tranquillité publique, mais à l'impulsion de la conscience, en accordant une entiere liberté de penser aux théologiens comme aux philosophes. Cette tolérance indefinie sur tous les dogmes et les opinions qui n'attaqueroient pas le code morale des nations, servit l'unique moyen de prévenir ou de sapper ce pouvoir, soit temporal, soit spirituel du clergé, qui, avec le temps, en fait un corps formidable à l'état; d'eteindre insensiblement l'enthousiasme des ministres et le fanatisme des peuples.[34]
>
> [All states should have much the same moral code of religion, and leave the rest, not to disputes among men, which must be prevented when they threaten the public peace, but to the promptings of conscience, while granting absolute liberty of thought to theologians as well as philosophers. This unlimited tolerance

[31] For Hume on the same point, see NCG, p. 196.
[32] For Pennsylvania in general, see HDI, IV, pp. 269–88 (Book 18, ch. LXXV). Here p. 286.
[33] Justamond, VI, p. 24; the first sentence is omitted.
[34] HDI, 1775, III, p. 456 (Book 19, ch. CVI); HDI, IV, p. 486.

of all dogmas and opinions which did not attack the moral code of the nations, would be the only way to guard against or weaken the power, spiritual or temporal, of the clergy, which over time will make it a body so dangerous to the state, and to extinguish by unperceived degrees the enthusiasm of the ministers and the fanaticism of the peoples.][35]

This achieved, Pennsylvania becomes as unconquerable as China; the customs of sociability are ineradicable because they alone are sacred and no conqueror can hope to change them.[36] The peaceable inhabitants might all be massacred, but nothing less could prevent them from emigrating en masse and finding new lands to cultivate. Nor is it any kind of accident that this idyll is not much like the realities of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, and that the authors of the *Histoire* seem unacquainted with the exploits of the Paxton Boys.[37] The New World is the theatre for the encounter between history and nature, utopia has reasserted itself, and the Quakers are as innocent as the *bons sauvages* and as benign as the Jesuits of Paraguay. Does this mean that the solution to the problem of emigration, the problem of telling how civil society could be re-created in oceanic space and historical time, continued to elude the authors? If so, Europeans would retain the option – which indeed they have from time to time exercised – of thinking Americans, and other settlers, creoles and barbarians when not thinking them beings outside history.

South of the Mason–Dixon line which is the southern border of Pennsylvania, every colony was a slave economy. This circumstance is not repressed in the *Histoire des deux Indes*, but it cannot be said that it is developed either;[38] there is no enquiry, as there might very well have been, whether tobacco and cotton are creating a culture of English creoles in the Chesapeake, the Carolinas or Georgia, and since the same enquiry is pressed very far in the chapters on the French islands, its omission cannot be dismissed as tenderness for the reputation of France's prospective allies. We read only some criticisms of the foundations of religious liberty in these colonies; it cannot be grounded in the spirit of Christianity, since Christ himself said that he brought not peace but a sword,[39] or in the teachings of John Locke, since his proposed constitution for Carolina, with its provisions for slavery and feudal authority, is unworthy of an Englishman and a philosopher.[40]

[35] Trans. JGAP. Justamond (VI, p. 222) follows a less outspoken version.
[36] HDI, IV, pp. 287–8 (Book 18, ch. LXXV).
[37] A Scots–Irish vigilante organisation, which carried out Indian massacres and defied the Quaker regime.
[38] Ibid. IV, pp. 304–5 (acknowledged in Virginia), 326 (prohibited at first in Georgia).
[39] HDI 1775, III, pp. 371–2. Cf. HDI, IV, p. 309, where the allusion to Christ is not made.
[40] Ibid. IV, p. 310.

Utopia left behind on the Delaware, it is as if the *Histoire* were running out of means either *philosophique* or *politique* for explaining how a society founded by expatriation could shape itself to the point of generating its own history. The uncertainty persists to the last. On the one hand:

C'est de l'Amérique Angloise, n'en doutons pas, que partira le premier rayon des sciences, si elles doivent éclore enfin sous un ciel si long-temps nébuleux. Par un contraste singulier avec l'ancien monde, où les arts sont allés du midi vers le nord, on verra dans le nouveau, le nord éclairer le midi. Laissez les Anglois défricher le terrain, purifier l'air, changer le climat, ameliorer la nature; un nouvel univers sortira de leurs mains, pour la gloire et le bonheur de l'humanité. Mais qu'ils prennent donc des mesures conformes à ce noble dessein; et qu'ils cherchent par des voies justes et louables, une population digne de créer un monde nouveau. C'est ce qu'ils n'ont pas fait encore.[41]

[It will be from English America, let there be no doubt, that the sciences will give forth their first rays, if any there can be under a sky for so long clouded. By a strange contrast with the history of the old world, where the arts migrated from south to north, we shall see in the new the north enlighten the south. Leave the English to break the soil, purify the air, change the climate and improve nature; a new universe will take shape from their hands, to the glory and happiness of humanity. But they must adopt measures suited to this noble design, and seek by just and laudable means a population worthy to make a new world. This they have not yet done.][42]

And the doubt recurs:

Si quelque chose manque à l'Amérique Angloise, c'est qu'elle ne forme pas précisément une nation. On y voit tantôt réunies et tantôt éparses des familles des diverses contrées de l'Europe. Ces colons, en quelque endroit que le hasard ou leur choix les ait fixés, conservent avec une prédilection indestructible, la langue, les préjugés et les habitudes de leur patrie. Des écoles et des églises séparées, les empêchent de se confondre avec le peuple hospitalier qui leur ouvrit un refuge. Toujours étrangers à cette nation par le culte, par les mœurs, et peut-être par les sentiments, ils couvent des germes de dissension, qui peuvent un jour causer la ruine et le bouleversement des colonies. Le seul preservatif qui doive prévenir ce désastre, dépend tout entier du régime des gouvernements.[43]

[If there be any circumstance wanting to the happiness of British America, it is that of forming one entire nation. Families are there found sometimes reunited, sometimes dispersed, originating from all the different countries of Europe. These colonists, in whatever spot chance or discernment may have planted them, all preserve, with a prejudice not to be worn out, their mother-tongue, their particularities and the customs of their own country. Separate schools and churches hinder them

[41] HDI, 1775, III, p. 411 (Book 18, ch. XCV). Cf. HDI, IV, p. 354.
[42] Trans. JGAP; cf. Justamond, VI, pp. 97–8. [43] HDI, IV, p. 364 (Book 18, ch. XCVII).

from mixing with the hospitable people who afforded them a place of refuge. Still more estranged from this people by worship, by manners, and probably by their feelings, they harbour seeds of dissension that may one day prove the ruin and total overthrow of the colonies. The only preservative against this disaster depends entirely on the conduct of the governments they belong to.][44]

First expatriation, now multiculturalism; the European, who lost his *patrie* completely by crossing the seas, now retains it so completely that he cannot change it or himself. Only legislation in the grand manner of primeval antiquity can re-create the nature which humans acquire from their history, and the *Histoire*, never sanguine about legislators, does not envisage anything so heroic for English America; it is opinion, rather than authority, which must rule. Perhaps this is why the *Histoire* seemed so half-hearted an account of the American Revolution to Paine, Franklin and Jefferson, and certainly it has trouble in fitting the independence of the northern colonies into the project of a French-led liberation of Europe from British domination. The 1775 edition counsels against the independence of the English colonies on the grounds that they would become either a weak Greek league prey to others, or a powerful Roman republic, a standing threat to the sugar islands and Louisiana;[45] while that of 1780, appearing after the Declaration of Independence and the outbreak of war between France and Britain, thinks the aim of French policy should be to maintain two strong powers in the northern continent, thus checking the United States' ambition and giving them time to learn republican discipline from the presence of an external threat.[46]

Considered as a document of state, a programme to enlist Enlightenment in the cause of a French recovery from the disasters of 1763, the *Histoire* has encountered something unexpected; and just as it has not known whether to hail the creole populations of the sugar islands as a new and independent trading nation or to dismiss them as incompetent garrisons needing the protection of a strong French navy, it cannot get beyond the vision of a Pennsylvanian utopia to an assessment of the now independent English colonies as a force acting in history and making a history of their own. The ejection from history as a result of navigation, so strongly insisted on in the *Histoire*'s earlier volumes, left the expatriate European little choice between utopia and dystopia, natural virtue and the war of all against all; he has not been provided with the capacity to form a civil society and embark on the pursuit of happiness. The mirage has begun to appear in

[44] Justamond, VI, p. 109.
[45] HDI, 1775, III, pp. 449–51 (chs. CIV, CV).
[46] HDI, IV, pp. 452–5.

the West.[47] The Anglicised Norman-Irishman Edmund Burke, who knew something about garrison nations, could give in the *Speech on Conciliation* a much better account of how a settler, even a slaveholding, population might formulate its own image of liberty and set about converting it into actions and institutions.

The 1780 edition of the *Histoire des deux Indes* gives an account of the Declaration of Independence which does not penetrate it so deeply as to notice that it sets about constituting an 'American people' as well as a league of thirteen states;[48] and there is – as is true of most writings of 1776–83 – very little foreknowledge of an empire of liberty to be created in the Mississippi valley and Louisiana, though this has been mentioned earlier as an opportunity lost by the English. The American revolution is an ominous complication for the war of French recovery the *Histoire* has aimed to support – a war not going too well for France in the year before the navy's momentous but temporary success in the Chesapeake and at Yorktown.[49] Since the *Histoire* lacks the depth of Burke's understanding that the English Americans are or may be a new people in the history of the world, it left them dissatisfied: Paine thinking it underestimated their patriot virtue,[50] Franklin and Jefferson – and indeed others – that it made too many concessions to the thesis that all species degenerated in America.[51] But the stumbling-block that Raynal and Diderot had erected in their own path was less that of American degeneration than that of European expatriation; they could denounce the extermination of indigenous peoples, but they could not see how settler peoples could re-create themselves as Europeans beyond Europe, beyond such picturesque exceptions as the republic of the filibusters or the utopia of the Quakers. They left Europeans the option – which they have exercised ever since – of treating the settler nations, Americans in particular, as creoles or barbarians when it is inconvenient to recognise their history.

As a result, the *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* fails, or at any rate ceases in its conclusion, to be what its title seems to promise. The nineteenth and last book, which offers to explain 'en quel état la conquête d'un monde a conduit et poussé le monde conquérant',[52] is in fact a systematic and

[47] Echevarria, 1957.

[48] 'The English reader will easily perceive that this account is not taken literally from the original manifesto published by the Americans.' Justamond, VI, p. 168, footnote.

[49] Ibid. VI, pp. 193–5, 197–9.

[50] Paine, 1782.

[51] Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* is a contribution to the *disputa del nuovo mondo*; see also the anecdote of Franklin's dinner party in Paris, when he manoeuvred the diminutive Raynal into standing back to back with the towering Jefferson.

[52] HDI, IV, p. 460 ('fin du dix-huitième livre').

wholly Eurocentric account of Enlightened history and theory of civil society, arranged under fourteen heads including 'Religion', 'Gouvernement' and 'Police', 'Agriculture', 'Commerce' and 'Population', 'Beaux-Arts et Belles-Lettres', 'Philosophie' and 'Morale.' This may be little more than the 'popularisation' of Enlightenment which Roger Chartier seems to consider the *Histoire*'s final character,[53] or it may be worth mining in more detail to see what had become of the *philosophe* enterprise between 1750 and 1780; the chapter on religion is certainly suggestive. But it does not offer what it has led the reader to expect; an account of the impact upon Europe of the discovery and domination of either the Indian Ocean basin – which is never mentioned again – or of the American continents and islands, though these remain crucial to the off-screen picture as it now and again emerges. We know what account the preceding eighteen books have offered of this impact: on the one hand the vast increase in commerce stimulated the enlightenment of Europe and its escape from the Christian millennium and the wars of religion, while on the other the establishment of servile, extractive and monopolistic economies threatened Europe with the maritime wars, national debts and British naval domination which have endangered its enlightened polity since this was established in 1713. All the great Enlightened histories, the *Decline and Fall* included, celebrate the establishment of modern Europe; the *Histoire des deux Indes* is perhaps the first to present it as self-endangered. But we ourselves must conduct this reading of the *Histoire*; it is barely summarised in the concluding book, and the history of the Asians, the Americans and the settler Europeans remains as passive as their commerce.

One might argue – though it would probably be an over-simplification – for an unresolved tension between two sets of intentions: one, possibly Raynal's, of employing enlightenment as an instrument in the revival of French naval power, the other, possibly Diderot's, of mounting a social criticism so radical as to entail the whole opposition between nature and the history of society. We read at one point that

> les voyages sur toutes les mers ont affoibli la morgue nationale; inspiré la tolérance civile et religieuse; ramené le lien de la confraternité originelle; inspiré les vrais principes d'une morale universelle fondée sur l'identité des besoins, des peines, des plaisirs, de tous les rapports communs aux hommes sous toutes les latitudes; amené la pratique de la bienfaisance avec tout individu qui la réclame, quelles que soient ses mœurs, sa contrée, ses loix et sa religion. Mais en même-temps les esprits ont été tournés vers les spéculations lucratives. Le sentiment de la gloire s'est

[53] Chartier, 1991, pp. 77–8.

affoibli. On a préféré la richesse à la célébrité; et tous ce qui tendoit à l'élévation a penché visiblement vers sa décadence.[54]

[our voyages on every ocean have lessened national arrogance; inspired us with tolerance both civil and religious; strengthened the chain of our original brotherhood; inculcated the true principles of a universal morality based on the identity of needs, pains, pleasures, and all the relations found among men in all latitudes; encouraged the practice of benevolence towards every individual who claims it, whatever his customs, country, laws, or religion. But at the same time our minds have been turned towards profitable speculations. The sentiment of glory has grown weaker. We have chosen riches rather than fame, and all that once tended to our elevation has inclined visibly towards its decay.][55]

And even this hope for universal brotherhood, modified by awareness of the loss of personality which enlightened society entails, gives place to a renewed fear of the expatriated Europeans. Sailors, like monks, fail in the role of *bons pères de famille*, and the indictment of slavery rules out any serious consideration of how settler populations may rise above the level of the conquistador or the creole.

Les expéditions de long cours ont enfanté une nouvelle espèce de sauvages nomades. Je veux parler de ces hommes qui parcourent tant de contrées qu'ils finissent par n'appartenir à aucune; qui prennent des femmes ou ils en trouvent, et ne les prennent que pour un besoin animal: de ces amphibes qui vivent à la surface des eaux: qui ne descendent à terre que pour un moment; pour qui toute plage habitable est égale; qui n'ont vraiment ni pères, ni mères, ni enfants, ni frères, ni parents, ni amis, ni concitoyens; en qui les liens les plus doux et les plus sacrés sont éteints; qui quittent leurs pays sans regret; qui n'y rentrent qu'avec l'impatience d'en sortir; et à qui l'habitude d'un élément terrible donne un caractère féroce. Leur probité n'est pas à l'épreuve de passage de la ligne; et ils acquièrent les richesses en échange de leur vertu et de leur santé.

Cette soif insatiable de l'or a donné naissance au plus infâme, au plus atroce de tous les commerces, celui des esclaves . . . Mais, sans ces bras, des contrés dont l'acquisition a coûté cher, resteroient incultes. Eh! Laissez-les en fiche, s'il faut que, pour les mettre en valeur, l'homme soit réduit à la condition de la brute, et dans celui qui achète, et dans celui qui vend, et dans celui qui est vendu.[56]

[Long voyages and expeditions have engendered a new species of nomad savages. I speak of those who traverse so many countries that they end by belonging to none; who take their women where they find them, and only to satisfy an animal need; of those amphibians whose home is on the face of the waters, who set foot on shore but for a moment and think all habitable beaches are alike; who have indeed neither fathers, mothers nor children, neither kindred, friends, nor fellow citizens; in whom the sweetest and most sacred ties are extinct; who quit their fatherlands

[54] HDI, IV, p. 702. [55] Trans. JGAP. [56] HDI, IV, p. 704.

without regret, who return impatient to set out once more; in whom the mastery of a terrible element has begotten ferocity of character. Their probity will not stand the test of crossing the line, and they acquire riches at the cost of both virtue and health.

This insatiable thirst for gold has given birth to the most infamous and atrocious of all forms of commerce, that is slaves . . . But (it will be said) without their muscle power, these lands which have cost so much to acquire will remain uncultivated. Very well! Wilderness let them remain, if to render them productive, men must be reduced to a brutal condition, be it that of the buyer, the seller, or the sold.][57]

Such all-male populations of beachcombers were already taking shape in the Pacific, but the *Histoire*'s uncontrollable dread of the seafarer left no room to understand or foresee such processes as those which would replace Old New Zealand by Pakeha New Zealand.[58] Enlightened sociology was based on the transformation of the nomad into the cultivator, but something is inhibiting Diderot – it is probably he who is writing – from imagining an Odysseus whose oar can ever become a winnowing fan. The American Revolution was confronting Europe with the greatest assertion of settler nationalism since the voyages began, the greatest assertion of the capacity of colonies to become viable and developing human communities; but the *Histoire* could imagine the virtuous and Lockean Quakers of Pennsylvania only as inhabiting a utopia, here replaced by the dystopia of mariners who become *encomienderos* and establish a slave trade. It fails as philosophic enquiry at the point where it fails to provide an account of the development of economies of free land and free labour in the New World.

The nineteenth book closes the enterprise of the *Histoire* by summoning its European readers to recognise that they will never be happy until they have governments worthy of their nature; and while this is not a revolutionary programme – it questions too deeply the possibility of its own realisation – it may have helped prepare for revolution by increasing the dominance of sentiment and the unhappy consciousness over the minds of a Rousseau-worshipping age-group. But the opposition between history and nature ruled out of account the possibility of writing a history for peoples beyond Europe, whether *sauvages* or creoles (to say nothing of Indians or Chinese, as nothing is said of them); and the closing chapters add to the repeated encomia upon commerce one more indictment of discovery and navigation. Humans are sedentary animals; their prospects of sociability depend upon their remaining at home, in the bosom of their *familles* and their *patries*, listening to the promptings of the heart and increasing the population. In the last analysis, therefore, philosophy preserves the option

[57] Trans. JGAP. [58] Belich, 1996.

of preferring utopia to commerce; it is better that societies should not encounter one another in history; and the *Histoire des deux Indes* does not offer a guide to how history should be conducted after they do. The book concludes by asking whether it would not have been better if the oceanic discoveries had never been made, and declaring that there will never be a moment in future history when this question will not be valid. Europe is threatened by a failure of nerve in the face of the Americas it has created; it has not invented a history in which they are included.[59]

This powerful, visionary but ultimately incoherent history has been studied, very selectively, but still at the length it deserves, because Gibbon read it; because it did something to shape the political world in which he lived while he wrote the *Decline and Fall*; and because it furnishes a wealth of information concerning the historiographical capacities of the *philosophe* and Enlightened mind. It may also be considered informative because it is in so many ways a history of a kind Gibbon never would and never could have written. It begins at a point in time after that at which he left off, and – like most Enlightened histories other than his – pursues its story past the end of the Christian millennium into modernity; indeed – and here it may be unique – to the brink of the revolutionary epoch which was the *philosophes*' post-modernity. In its constant confrontation between history and nature, its willingness to use the paradox of savage innocence to ask whether history ought to have happened at all, the *Histoire* belonged to a late-Enlightened world with which Gibbon was a contemporary, but which there is no reason to suspect be ever shared or considered.

[59] HDI, IV, p. 705.

Conclusion

CHAPTER 18

Gibbon and the empires

This volume has focused upon two categories of humans, real and imagined, who were marginal to empire in various senses of that word; barbarians, inhabitants of the Old World and ancient history, who were capable of shaking and overturning the empires with which they came in contact, and even of founding empires of their own, transitory unless the barbarians changed themselves in the act of founding them; and savages, inhabiting for the most part the New Worlds with which Europe came in contact in the course of its modern history. Savages had no capacity to shake empires; if not heroic warriors, which was rare and found only among hunters, they were bewildered vagrants or villagers, victims of a history imposed upon them because they had not reached the stage of making one of their own. Their challenge to empire and history – terms on the way to becoming interchangeable – was moral, conceptual and existential, and not of their own making; the philosophers of Europe used them to confront history with nature, and advise Europe of the former term's ambivalence, as well as the iniquities of the empires Europeans were constructing.

In so widely ranging a scenario, the concept of empire took on a great variety of meanings, ranging from the Achaemenid empire of the sixth century BC – faced with which Herodotus had written the earliest known description of nomad peoples – to the *établissements et commerce des Européens* surveyed by Raynal (if empires these should be called), with their slave plantations and extractive economies. This is therefore a convenient point for a survey of the diversity of 'empires' studied in eighteenth-century historiography, and the place among them of the empires of concern to Gibbon.

The historical imagination of western Europe – we are still not acquainted with any other imagination of history that had developed comparable intellectual complexity – was of course dominated by the thought of the Roman empire and its decline and fall (it was in this context that historians did most of their thinking about barbarians). That empire had been

unique among the empires of antiquity – those, for instance, that figured in the Christian scheme of the Four Monarchies – in that it had not been conquered and acquired by a dynasty of warlords or sacred kings ruling from palaces, but had been achieved by a republic, which had subsequently disintegrated under its weight and been absorbed by its institutions. The chief legacy of this empire to western political thought had therefore been the notion of a complex and fragile relation between *imperium* and *libertas*. Only their republican liberty had stimulated the Romans to acquire an empire; the empire had proved too great a burden for the institutions of the republic to sustain; but when liberty was lost under the Caesars, who were necessary to rule empire, the ability to sustain empire had been lost with it. The liberty that mattered was the self-destructive liberty of empire-builders; that the Romans were depriving Spaniards, Gauls, Batavians and Britons of their liberty was recognised, but this had been no more than the warlike independence of barbarous peoples, not the complex and law-governed liberty of republican citizens. The key to the story was the liberty of which the Romans had deprived themselves. It was a problem that several centuries had elapsed between the loss of liberty and the loss of empire – and the consequent disintegration of imperial culture – but Gibbon had dealt with this by proposing that peace and prosperity had endowed the citizens of the empire with a shared fabric of manners – the fruit of *commercium* rather than *imperium* – which had endured for some time after the political and martial spirit to defend it had been lost.

The transformation of the empire of the Caesars – closely related to its decline and fall but not identical with it – could be reckoned from the victory of Constantine, his transfer of the seat of empire to the Bosphorus, and his establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Here modern history began, and with it that of an empire self-challenged as no other had been. It was possible to believe that the prophets and legislators who had founded the great religions of empire had all – Confucius was the only exception – at some point made the mistake of appealing to gods in ways that encouraged the growth of priesthoods, through whom the power of empire must subsequently be exercised; but the price paid for Christian empire had been the growth of the Christian church, a system of spiritual authority which could – and regularly did – challenge the imperial authority in the name of principles and values that might support it, but which it had not made and did not control. It was this, we have found Gibbon saying, that differentiated modern history from ancient; it divided modern history into two narratives that must be written separately, no matter how closely they were intertwined.

A history composed of *sacerdotium et imperium* survived the end of one composed of *imperium et libertas*, to rule the thousand years that passed before the latter's revival; but it must be kept in mind that *sacerdotium* came to be perceived less as a challenge to the emperor's rule over many territories (*imperium militiae*) than to his sovereignty over any territory over which he could be prince (*imperium domi*). The second central fact for Europeans about the history of Constantinean empire was that New Rome lost control of its far western territories – Italy north of Rome itself, and the great provinces along the Atlantic coasts of the European peninsula. This loss may have been of little immediate concern to emperors whose power and problems lay much further east, but the civilisation of which Gibbon and we ourselves are heirs came to regard the problems and processes of the Latin provinces as constituting the historical process itself, so that our capacity to construct histories of other civilisations has been impaired. 'Empire', as the word is important to Gibbon, took on a series of meanings of the sort we call 'western'.

The establishment in the Latin provinces of barbarian kingdoms, whose chiefs had inherited, acquired and displaced Roman imperial authority, preceded and was complicated by the Arab conquests of all Mediterranean Africa and much of Spain. What might be considered an Islamic 'empire' was considered by Gibbon – in his later volumes – primarily as a religious system which, being unitarian and non-philosophic, had not generated a *sacerdotium* independent of civil authority. He seems to have regarded the successive caliphates, however, as not unlike the oriental 'empires' they had absorbed in Persia; less perhaps in their 'despotism' than in the inherent instability of palace government, especially as regards succession. 'Despotisms', for the most part, were prone to fragmentation. Muslim history, however, remained like that of the eastern Roman empire at a certain distance from the history of *sacerdotium et imperium*, which it was necessary to recount in a predominantly Latin perspective from the moment when the bishops of Rome found themselves territorial potentates, and were obliged by the dangers of that position to form alliances with the Frankish kingdom in Gaul – a second moment (that of Constantine having been the first) from which Gibbon dated the beginnings of modern history. Both kingdom and papacy were enabled to enlarge their claims to universal authority (of which Greeks and Arabs alike took little notice); but the establishment of a western *imperium* in 800 was so much the work of the *sacerdotium* with which it endeavoured to compete as to be only debatably part of the history of empires that Gibbon strove to centre on the history of the eastern Roman system. The papacy, the Italian republics and the monarchy of France were

too strong for the Hohenstaufen – Gibbon was at bottom a Guelph – and the *verità effettuale* of history passed to the monarchies of France, Spain and England, which had not formed part of the medieval 'empire'.

Two of these kingdoms – Spain and France – came to play in western historiography the role of 'universal monarchies', which other kingdoms and confederacies joined to frustrate, thus creating the plural states-order of Enlightened Europe. 'Universal monarchy' as a concept resembles 'empire', but is not quite identical with it; neither Spain nor France claimed to inherit Roman 'empire' in its 'medieval' sense,[1] and though the possession of extra-European realms in America and the Philippines played some part in the definition of Spain as such a monarchy, no equivalent was necessary in the case of Louis XIV's France. There were, however, claims to global dominion of which some were Roman in origin. Gibbon stopped short of these questions. His narrative ends formally, and on the whole actually, with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453; he has reached the end of the Decline and Fall, and does not look beyond it. He does not narrate the events of 1492 – when Hume thought the discovery of America had initiated a new 'modern history' – or 1494, when Robertson inaugurated the view, prevalent until the mid-twentieth century, that the French invasion of Italy and the Spanish response had marked the beginnings of a 'modern' Europe of contending states. Gibbon clearly knew what his friends had written, but did not enter into what we think of as 'modern' history. His theme had become that of the 'Christian millennium' in the west; in the east, also termed 'Europe', he did not continue the history of empire he had rather half-heartedly traced down to 1453. It would have been possible, but it was certainly not necessary, to imagine a further history of the rise, greatness and decline of the Ottoman empire, leading to the encroachments upon it of the Austrian Kaiser and the Russian Tsar which were creating a new history of empires rather questionably Enlightened. The Austrian Habsburgs are only now and then visible in the *Decline and Fall*, and then their role is that of the latest (it was to be the last) phase of the history of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation. Austrian conquests in Orthodox Europe south of the Danube do not figure in his writings; neither do the ambitions of the Tsars and Tsarinas in the Black Sea region.

The Russian empire, however, plays a significant, but not a European role in the *Decline and Fall*. Its extent is noted as greater than that of the Roman empire; the Muscovite state – Gibbon probably accepts with the usual caution the view that Peter's and Catherine's reforms have rendered it

[1] See, however, Pagden, 1995, for modifications of this generalisation.

European and Enlightened – has expanded through Siberia and achieved contact and treaty with the Ch'ing empire. This is a major event, not in European so much as in world history. Gibbon follows Voltaire in believing that Russian and Chinese domination of the steppe will reduce it to cultivation and urbanisation, thus ending for ever that age, traceable back to biblical and mythical times, in which the shepherd peoples emerged from time to time to overthrow and renew empires. The history of the 'barbarians', in this sense, is at an end; Gibbon's account of this matter was probably written before he began the text of the *Decline and Fall*.[2] It is a huge event in that Eurasian history he learned from Joseph de Guignes to consider the necessary context of the history of empires; and it is brought about by processes occurring in the vast northern interior of the Old World, not by the seaborne expansion of west European commerce (except in so far as Tsar Peter's interest in the Dutch and English navies helped spur his half-barbaric Enlightenment).

Empire over nomads could be empire only in so far as it succeeded in converting them into settled or at least tributary peoples; and it existed only in the land spaces of Eurasia, hardly in the Gaidhealtachtaids of the Atlantic archipelago, or in the seaborne 'empires' of the maritime western Europeans. We have studied the historiography of their encounter with 'savages', and seen that it challenged empire by opposing nature to history; but in what sense were the *établissements des Européens* empires at all? Empires were modes of rule entailing the presence of civil society; but savages were excluded from this by the fact of their savagery, and slaves by the fact, if not the justification, of their enslavement. There remained settlers, colonists or planters; but their legal, civil and consequently historical status was not unambiguous. Those in Spanish America inhabited viceroyalties, 'colonies' which were realms of the Spanish crown, among the kingdoms which brought it close to the status of an empire; those in Anglo-British America were part of an 'empire', but neither trading corporations nor counties palatine, nor anything else which made it clear in just what the crown's 'empire' consisted. As these colonies developed as civil societies, therefore, and claimed to take part in the crown's government over them, their lack of a clearly defined status led to confused and increasingly bitter debate, culminating in a war of secession that left 'Americans' equipped with a political philosophy, but no more historiography than could grow out of the necessary myth of their foundation upon its principles. In the Spanish case, secession was delayed by another

[2] NCG, pp. 392–6.

half-century, but preceded by a bitter and therefore significant debate as to whether *criollos* could claim an 'ancient' history in that of the Aztec and Inca empires.

By the term 'empire' we have come to mean the expansion of a political system to include, or more commonly to hold in provincial subjection, peoples not belonging to it, or to the 'people' whose state has become an empire. The original meaning of the word *imperium*, however, is rule or sovereignty: the rule of a people over itself (*imperium domi*) or over others it has conquered and subjected (*imperium militiae*). In the Roman case the latter sphere expanded to so vast an extent that the *imperium* of the *populus Romanus* came to mean its 'empire' as we use the word: its system of rule over others, and all the others whom it ruled. The history of the Roman empire, however, was not a simple history of rulers and ruled; it was presumed that the provincials had become Romans, but on terms which withheld from them the capacity to rule themselves – the *libertas* necessary to *imperium*. By the end of the history we call early modern, maritime Europeans had acquired enough rule in lands beyond Europe to encourage and perhaps justify us in giving the word 'empire' the primary meaning of the rule of Europeans over non-Europeans; but this is not necessarily how the word was used in the eighteenth century. 'The British empire' still primarily meant the rule of England over itself, expanded to the point where that self had become 'Britain'; England had been defined as an 'empire', meaning that it shared its sovereignty with no alien ruler. The problem had become that of how 'empire' might be shared with Scotland as an associated kingdom, Ireland as a subject kingdom, and Caribbean and American colonies whose status was left unclear. The successful revolt and secession of the last, however, is not accurately described as 'the fall of the first British Empire',[3] since 'empire' did not simply denote a system of dominated others, nor had colonies been established so that they might be dominated or serve to dominate others. Their revolution signalled not the fall of an empire, but the failure to include them within one; though beyond this story might be glimpsed an 'empire' over the whole North American continent, which the independent colonies were to pursue and achieve with an energy greater than that displayed by the British state. The latter never allowed its *imperium militiae* to become the master of its *imperium domi*; the government of Ireland or India was always secondary to the government of Britain; and 'empire' in the modern sense meant the government of realms not incorporated in the body of the parent state, and

[3] E.g., Tucker and Hendrickson, 1982.

therefore perceived, and self-perceived, as 'others' – a status particularly galling to colonies of settlers.

The history of a modern empire must therefore be a history of multiple entities – almost of multiple histories – of which some were threatened with reduction to non-entity by being denied the sovereignty with which to establish histories of their own. Savages were denied the capacity to take part in history; slaves were denied the opportunity; settlers, colonists and creoles – the most complex case of all – were acknowledged to be capable of civil society, while it was not yet clear whether they merely continued the history out of which they came, or began conducting one of their own. For this reason it is to be regretted that we do not have Robertson's history of English America, or a creole-Jesuit history of Mexico since the Conquest; it may be, of course, that in both cases we are regretting an impossibility. Raynal, Diderot and their collaborators had attempted a brilliant and suggestive synthesis of the history of seaborne empires, operating within certain parameters: their use of savage society to play the part of nature in an antithesis with history; their determination to indict modern Europe as still more barbarous than Enlightened; and Diderot's obsession with the decivilising effects of trans-oceanic migration. There were innumerable barbarous frontiersmen to whom his description did perfect justice, but when he encountered colonies in the process of becoming civil societies, he was obliged to depict them as utopias where they were not barbarians, and the attempt to present the oceanic world system as civilised by commerce encountered obstacles it was not able to overcome (a contrast with Adam Smith might be constructed here). The *Histoire des deux Indes* perhaps belongs more in the prehistory of Revolution than in the history of the historiography of empire, which was about to enter a new phase.

This major development used to be known as the advent of the 'second British empire', a term which overstated the continuity between the system of colonies that had become a means to the military control of eastern North America, and the system of Indian provinces for which the British state and parliament found themselves responsible through the East India Company acting as a successor to Mogul authority. Here for the first time was empire in the full modern sense: the control and government by Europeans of millions of people and their territories belonging to a non-European civilisation; an empire unlike the Roman because cultural assimilation was not to be looked for, but like it in its geographic extent and its military and provincial complexity; unlike the seaborne empires studied by Raynal in that it did not consist of savages, slaves and settlers. New and vast problems in the theory and practice of empires at once presented themselves, of which both

Robertson and Gibbon showed themselves aware, though only in the last stages of their work.

The central intellectual problem that arose was that of 'oriental despotism'. Mogul rule itself, and many of the structures of Hindu and Muslim life, conformed to the imagery of orientalism, and the resultant stereotypes became established in British imperial thinking. In the last analysis, however, it could not be maintained that Indians were inherently servile – a concept reaching back to Aristotle's 'slaves by nature' – or that they lived under the conditions conducive to servility – an absolute lack of legal protection or security of property – without inferring that British rule over them must itself be despotic; and the role of despot was one to which no wielder of *imperium* would aspire, being not only reprehensible but self-destructive. Empires must be systems of law, and law must therefore exist among their subjects; nor did the masters of empire seek the role of the semi-divine legislator who creates law where only nature has ruled. The *philosophe* indictment of *despotisme orientale* as a concept, earlier voiced by Enlightened thinkers such as Voltaire and Anquetil-Duperron, was energetically taken up in British-ruled Bengal, and William Jones and his Asiatic Society flung themselves into researches on Hindu and Muslim law, language and religion.[4] It should be emphasised that the aim of seeking out the history of Indian law was not to set limits to the exercise of empire, but to legitimate it by furnishing it with historic and legal foundations; Warren Hastings had financed the researches that Edmund Burke was able to use against him in his impeachment. *Imperium* and *libertas* never quite lost their inherently suspect relationship.

With this we return to the Old World, the scene of the first volume of the *Histoire des deux Indes*. Jones, who opened up, like de Guignes, 'new and important scenes in the history of mankind', remained a denizen of a late humanist intellectual world; Woden and Fo appear in his pages as possibly the same person. None the less, his generation of scholars transformed the history of Asian religion. Robertson thought the Bhagavad Gita deserved very serious attention from enlightened Christians; Gibbon hoped the Asiatic Society would clear up the mystery of Fo, as they did by preparing the way for the discovery of Buddhism.[5] Above all, Jones's decipherment of Sanskrit and demonstration of its place in the history of languages led to the discovery or invention of the Aryans, the Caucasians, and the Indo-Germanic mark thesis; major steps in creating the

[4] Cannon, 1990.

[5] For Robertson, *Works*, IX, pp. 192–4; for Gibbon, DF, VI, ch. 64, n. 33 (Womersley, 1994, III, p. 806; also p. 1229, for Gibbon's references to Jones.)

nineteenth-century anthropology which was to replace the Scottish stadial scheme.[6] We pass beyond barbarians, savages and the patterns of world history within which Gibbon wrote the *Decline and Fall*.

There now arose new kinds of empire and new meanings of the word. The acquisition of empire in India was enlarged by the maritime hegemony acquired by Britain during twenty years of war against the revolutionary empire of France; there followed the transformation of the Atlantic and Caribbean by the liquidation of slavery, and the establishment of new lands of settlement in the Southern Ocean. Both English and Scottish Enlightenment Protestantism entered upon new ways of thinking: evangelical, utilitarian, idealist, and classicist in new and imperial terms. Gibbon saw only the beginnings of these changes. Dying in 1794, he was a contemporary of the empire that broke up in America, and the accompanying global crisis in the Enlightenment states system of which Raynal and Diderot attempted a pre-revolutionary history. To understand the *Decline and Fall* we return to the history of the Old World; the western peninsulas of Eurasia, the east Mediterranean basin, the Pontic steppe and its hinterlands as far as China. The intersections of barbarism and religion change as the focus of Roman history moves east and European history is re-created in the West.

[6] Burrow, 1966.

Envoi

This volume has been concerned with the theme of barbarism. That of religion will appear, and for the first time become dominant, in the volume that is to follow. *Barbarism and Religion* V will study, and present in the context of ecclesiastical histories ancient and modern, the history of the Christian church and religion narrated, first, in the two chapters concluding the volume of the *Decline and Fall* published in 1776; second, in the chapters published when Gibbon resumed his history in 1781. During this hiatus there occurred a controversy, occasioned by his proposal in 1776 to deal only with the secondary and secular causes of the spread of Christianity before Constantine established it as the religion of state. As a result, many readers' understandings of the intentions of his history were formed before he had written or they had read it. It will therefore be necessary to study the controversy, as a crucial event in the reception of the *Decline and Fall* by its readers then and since; but no less necessary to enquire what place the two chapters of 1776 have in Gibbon's construction of a history of Christianity, in that volume and those which came after it. There will emerge a complex history of theology, philosophy and above all ecclesiastical authority, derived from causes not identical with those Gibbon gave for the spread of Christianity.

The introduction of church history marks a profound change – not foreshadowed in the preface of 1776[1] – in the history written by Gibbon and in history as he perceived it. From now on it is possible to perceive the *Decline and Fall* as a great argument between imperial and ecclesiastical authority and between secular and sacred history. The series *Barbarism and Religion* has been and continues to be a series of attempts to illuminate Gibbon and his work by situating them in contexts which elucidate and explain them. This enterprise is without theoretical limits, since there is no limit to the number of contexts which a historical phenomenon may be

[1] Womersley, 1994, 1, pp. 1–4. NCG, pp. 372–80.

seen occupying, and *Barbarism and Religion* has offered simply to deal with such contextualisations as they present themselves in the reading of the *Decline and Fall*. Some readers, however, have found themselves ill at ease on a bottomless and boundless sea, and have asked for a sight of the butt and seamark of my utmost sail. This request places the author of *Barbarism and Religion* in a predicament not unlike that which confronted the author of the *Decline and Fall*, and I must return an answer not less provisional than that given by Gibbon in similar circumstances,[2] one following the structure of his work rather than mine.

Barbarism and Religion V, just described, will be succeeded by a sixth volume – provisionally entitled *The Redefinition of Europe* – pursuing the narrative of Gibbon's third volume, the second of the two published in 1781, to the end of the sequence of emperors claiming to exert authority in the western, Latin-speaking, provinces of the Roman empire. This was the point Gibbon in 1776 had engaged himself to reach, and though he indicated how he might proceed past it, he was not committed to doing so. It was a point from which he and his readers could envisage the further history of that neo-Latin culture which increasingly claimed the name of Europe: the wars of papacy and empire, the barbaric kingdoms of the Atlantic coastlands and islands, the Wars of Religion and the emergence of the Enlightened states system, the colonisation of the Americas and the revolutionary crisis just beginning. This was the era of the 'Christian millennium' and the escape from it: the European, British and American history in which Gibbon lived and wrote.

He had, however, already indicated his decision not to write it. The two volumes of 1781 were followed by an even longer hiatus than the first, and it was not until 1788 that Gibbon began publishing his later history, and executing – he had already foretold – a second and equally great shift in the objectives of his grand narrative, carrying the *Decline and Fall* through the history of the east Roman empire – the monarchy founded by Constantine – to its end in 1453. He found, however that he could not write the history of this Orthodox millennium without constant reference to the cultures, including the Latin, that had impinged upon the shrinking empire of Constantinople, and he was thus obliged to write as – to use our terms – a medievalist, a Byzantinist and an Ottomanist. The later *Decline and Fall* is still a history of barbarism and religion; but the barbarians are Avars, Bulgars and Mongols from the steppe, the religion is Islam as much as Christianity, and the Arabs and Turks are not barbarians but enthusiasts.

[2] Womersley, 1994, I, p. 3; statements made in 1776, 1781, 1782.

Their histories are not that of the Latin Europe emerging at the end of the 1781 volumes, though they are linked with it; and the later Gibbon is writing history other than that which took shape in Roman late antiquity.

He was in 1781 only half committed to writing the history he published in 1788, and there is a narrative to be written of how his intentions were resumed and carried to completion. The end of his third volume is therefore, as it was for him, a moment at which to pause and consider his achievement to that point; there is much that can, though there is much that can not, be considered without looking ahead to the latter volumes. *Barbarism and Religion* will therefore follow the *Decline and Fall* in provisionally rounding itself off at the point Gibbon reached in 1781. The reader need not feel obliged to look further, though the author does not rule out a continuation of the journey. He now invites the reader to travel in Gibbon's company to the years 476 and 1781 in the Christian chronology.

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